

SESSION 3: GOD THROUGH THE DIVISION TO EXILE

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Isaiah chs. 6, 10, 40, 11:1-10, 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 57:15, 63:1-6; John 12:30-33; Ezekiel 1; Nahum 1:1-8; Hosea 11:1-9.

Summary of the Video: Module 3, Episode 3

Now that we're through the hard bit, the historical section of the division to exile, let's get into the prophetic and theological material. Again, we come back to Biblical Theology by examining God, Gospel, People and Mission in this section of Scripture.

In this session we look at God. We'll focus in on the prophetic writings and especially on Isaiah.

Andrew Wilson draws out theological insights and connections to the NT from Isaiah's most memorable visions: the exaltation of the Lord Yahweh who atones for his people (ch. 6), the combination of sovereignty and responsibility in worldly affairs (ch. 10), the incomparable enormity of God's power and sovereignty (ch. 40), the Messiah as seen through key texts (chs. 7, 9, 11, 42, 49, 52-53, 61, 63).

Andrew Wilson transitions to briefly introduce theological insights from Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God reveals his character through the names of Yahweh (LORD): Yahweh-Tsedeqnu (the LORD our Righteousness) and Yahweh-Shammah (the LORD is There). God reveals his immense glory in the first vision of Ezekiel.

Following this we grapple with various depictions of God to see how they compare and contrast (Nahum 1:1-8; Hosea 11:1-9). Because they wrote to different audiences and God revealed different aspects of his character to them, sometimes the prophets can appear to present conflicting pictures of God. But instead these should be combined to form a fuller illustration of what he is like.

The video steps away from lecture into a time for reflection. You may decide to break off from the video at 1:13:36.

Do you see human freedom as being a freedom of inclination (free to do what we want to do) or as something else? As we look at the biblical text, we don't want to rush to systematic explanations but rather allow the text of Scripture to speak. Scripture doesn't seem to wrap this question up neatly for us. (But I do agree with the idea that we're free only to do what we want to do.)

We often see God either as a policeman or as Father Christmas. How would an Israelite have viewed God? This is hard to say. We can say what they should “officially believe” according to the text of Scripture. But we might assume that they didn’t actually believe those things and that’s why the prophets and priests had to declare who God really is.

Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Shakespeare, Hamlet, Polonius—Shakespeare (British author) wrote a play in which the character Hamlet kills another character named Polonius.

Council of Chalcedon—in AD 451 church leaders wrote an official statement of what all Christians should believe about Jesus, specifically that he is fully God and fully man.

Yahweh—this is God’s personal name (compare it to Zeus or Shiva); most Bibles have not written the name but have instead written LORD .

Liturgy—the patterns and habits of worship (prayers, readings, postures, songs, styles, timings of things, etc.)

Watch Video

Watch Module 3, Episode 3 (1hr 23 minutes (1 hr 14 minutes without the Q&A)).

Division to Exile

- I. The Story So Far
- II. The History of Israel and Judah from the Division to the Exile
- III. God
- IV. Gospel
- V. People
- VI. Mission

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Isaiah 6:1-7

A dead king vs. the living God

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord ...

The "Lord" not the "LORD"? Cf. John 12:40-41

"Heaven is not coming apart at the seams. He sits. And he sits on a throne. All is at peace and he has control."

Cp. Isa 52:13; 57:15; John 12:30-33

... sitting upon a throne ...

How big is the temple? A royal or bridal train?

Sinless beings. Army-destroying power. Why hide their eyes?

Sarap = to burn. Seraphim = burning ones?

... high and lifted up ...

... and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

The song that lasts 700 years (cf. Rev 4-5)

And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Why do things shake in theophanies? Selfquakes?

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Atonement is at God's initiative. Isaiah is helpless in front of holiness, but God takes his sin away

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Sovereignty and Responsibility in Isaiah 10

Yahweh is Responsible

5-6: Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

12: When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.

15-17: Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day.

The King of Assyria is Responsible

7-11: But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; for he says: "Are not my commanders all kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?"

13: For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped."

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Questions and Answers in Isaiah 40

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? (40:12-14. The focus here is on God's **knowledge** and **wisdom**)

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. (40:18-20; cf. 44:1-20; 46:1-13. The idea here is that God is **incomparable**)

Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. (40:21-24; cf. 43:1-28; 44:21-45:25. God is **sovereign** over history, particularly Judah's enemies)

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. (40:25-26. God is **all-powerful**)

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (40:27-31; cf. 41:1-20. God **sustains** his people)

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The Messiah in Isaiah

Ref	Key phrases	Messiah's Attributes
7:10-25	Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.	Virgin-born; God-with-us; poor; rules after Assyria destroy Israel and Syria
9:1-7	For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it ...	Rules the nations; divine; everlasting; kingdom of peace; Davidic; justice; righteousness
11:1-10	There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding ... In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples —of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.	From David's line; Spirit-filled; wise, powerful; renews creation; father of David; nations ask of him
42:1-9	Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break ...	Spirit-filled; justice; quiet and gentle; light for the nations; God's glory (v8)?
49:1-7	It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.	Restorer of Israel; light to the nations for the salvation of all peoples
52:13-53:12	Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?	Arm of Yahweh in human form; suffering Servant
61:1-7	The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.	Spirit-anointed preacher, liberator, healer, comforter
63:1-6	Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."	Conquering King; wrathful Judge of the nations; Saviour of Israel

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The Compound Names of Yahweh

Yahweh-Tsedeqnu

- Jeremiah 23 begins with a denunciation of the shepherds who destroy God's people
- God promises that shepherds will come in the future who care for God's people (v4)
- But the days are coming when God will raise up a righteous Branch who will rule wisely and execute justice in the land (v5)
- He will result in salvation and safety
- And his name will be Yahweh-Tsedeqnu, or Yahweh-our-righteousness
- Providing us with righteousness is not merely something God does – it is part of his name, part of his nature

Yahweh-Shammah

- Ezekiel addresses the consequences of Jerusalem's destruction
- The glory of Yahweh is seen on the Chebar canal (ch 1), and leaves the temple by the eastern gate (ch 10)
- Ezekiel 40-48 is then a lengthy and complex vision of the eschatological temple, presented in idealistic terms, with the river of life flowing from the temple
- The city of Jerusalem as a whole, seen eschatologically, is then given the name Yahweh-Shammah, or Yahweh-is-there
- Being "there", wherever his people are, is part of God's name, part of who he is

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The Glory of God in Ezekiel 1

- The vision of Ezekiel 1 is probably the most epic and dramatic theophany (appearance of God) in the Bible
 - A windstorm coming from the north, and a huge cloud with brightness all around it
 - Fire flashing from within the cloud, and gleaming metal in the midst of it
 - From the middle come four living creatures – humanlike, with four wings
 - They have four faces: of a human (ruler of creation on God's behalf), a lion (king of wild animals), an ox (strongest of domestic animals), and an eagle (most powerful of the birds)
 - Their wings touch each other, forming an outward-looking square
 - Collectively, they resemble fire, with torches moving between them, a fire in the middle, and lightning flashing out of them
 - Each living creature has a wheel-within-a-wheel (interlocking at 90 degrees, presumably) next to them
 - The spirit of the living creature is within the wheels
 - Over the heads of the living creatures is a gigantic crystal expanse (Carson: an upside-down crystal wok)
 - When their wings move, it sounds like the mighty tumult of an army. When the voice above them is heard, they let down their wings and fall silent
 - Above the expanse is a throne, like sapphire, surrounded by rainbows of living colour
 - Seated on the throne is one with a human appearance: gleaming metal from the waist up and fire from the waist down
- "Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh". Translation: it kind of looked a tiny bit like something that was ever-so-slightly like this, but that doesn't even get close to describing God

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Two Depictions of God: Compare and Contrast

Nahum 1:1-8

An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers.

The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.

Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Hosea 11:1-9

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me.

The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.

My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Think of the context in which Isaiah received his vision in Isaiah 6. All kings and leaders die, but the Lord lives. Discuss how this might enter into a conversation with a non-Christian friend. Then, talk about how it might help a fellow believer.

2. If Isaiah saw Jesus, the LORD, sitting on the throne (as John 12:41 says), how does this build our theology of Jesus?

3. What has God "shaken" in your life since you've met him?

4. What impact does meditating on God's enormity and majesty have on how you approach issues of justice in your community?

5. From the chart of Messianic prophecies of Jesus, what do we learn about the nature, character and work of Christ?

6. God uses words (e.g. “God is with you” or “The LORD our righteousness”) *and* pictures (e.g. Ezekiel 1) to describe himself. What do we gain from each form of revelation? And, describe what you believe about God because of these revelations.

7. It may appear at first glance that Hosea and Nahum present conflicting accounts of God’s character. How did you process the Nahum and Hosea pictures of God? [You may find it helpful to read the extract from Michael Reeves, *The Good God*]

Meditation on Scripture

Isaiah 6:1-7

Isaiah 49:1-7

Hosea 11:1-9

Putting This Session into Practice

This session presents us with many tensions: widespread injustice and the sovereignty of God; God’s jealousy and love; God’s sovereignty and human responsibility; the glory of God and humility of the Messiah. Rather than assuming these conflict, we have been invited to allow them to expand our worship and stretch our faith. In response, let’s meditate this week on the tensions of our faith and worship the Lord through them.