

Isaiah

“The King Is Coming”

I. Introduction to Isaiah

Isaiah is the twenty-third book of the Bible and begins a new section called “The Prophets”. The Prophets were men divinely chosen and gifted to speak to the nations.

Their message included:

- Fore-telling or Prediction: Because God is outside of time, He often unveils the future as it fulfills His purposes.
- Forth-telling: Not all prophesy is predictive. The Prophets would apply the Word of God to the present or current situation of the Nation.

Some Prophets did not speak of future events, but explained current events using the Word of God. They spoke timeless truths to their generation. By example, Elijah’s and Elisha’s ministries were prophetic, but not predictive.

Most prophets predicted future events as well as speaking to the present generation. Their message often had a near and far fulfillment. Some prophets had miraculous signs that accompanied their ministry. Elijah, Elisha and others used vivid illustrations to drive their point home:

- Isaiah walked around naked
- Jeremiah wore a defiled sash
- Ezekiel cooked bread with dung as fuel

A. The books of the Prophets are divided into two groups:

1. Major Prophets

This group consists of five books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. These are called the Major Prophets because of their length, not their message. They make up 22% of the Old Testament, and are listed in chronological order.

2. Minor Prophets

This group consists of twelve books: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These twelve books combined, are not as large as Isaiah. The Minor Prophets are not found in chronological order and can be further divided into two groups:

- Nine pre-exilic – Hosea through Zephaniah
- Three post-exilic – Haggai through Malachi

B. Isaiah is first among the Prophets because of chronology and content. Though Isaiah has more chapters than any other prophetic book, by word count it ranks third in size. This book consists of sixty-six chapters and like the Bible, divides into two sections.

1. Chapters 1 – 39 make up the first section which speaks mostly of judgment.

Chapters 40 – 66 make up the second section and mostly address the work of Christ.

2. We have a clearer portrait of Christ in Isaiah than any other Old Testament book.

Therefore, Isaiah has been referred to as the Fifth Gospel because of his detailed description of Christ. Much of the focus of Isaiah is the Messiah:

- a. Coming of the Messiah
- b. Suffering of the Messiah
- c. Future reign of the Messiah

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- C. According to J. Barton Payne, the book contains one-hundred-eleven predictions. Of the 1292 verses, 59% deal with future events. Because the predictive element of Isaiah is so profound, the book has been under constant attack. Those who dismiss the miraculous, seek to move the date Isaiah was written, until after the events he foretells have transpired. To do this, they have established a very complicated system of authorship, starting with two Isaiahs and ending with an innumerable host of contributors. All of their efforts fail because as late as they date the book, it still includes the detailed portrayal of Christ.

The following list of provides proofs for an early date and single author.

1. There are thirteen references to Isaiah within the book.
 2. Jewish and Christian tradition supports a single author.
 3. No ancient manuscript includes any division between supposed two books.
 4. Jesus attributes the whole prophesy to Isaiah by quoting from both sections.
 5. Dual or multi-authorship arose in the 1700's by those who reject the inspiration of Scripture.
- D. Isaiah began his ministry about 650 B.C. and served faithfully for more than 60 years. His ministry concluded when he was killed under the reign of wicked King Manasseh. Tradition holds Isaiah is the one referred to in Hebrews 1:37, and was sawn in two. Since Manasseh repented, this would make for an interesting reunion in heaven.
- E. Isaiah came from a wealthy and influential family. He was well-educated and, prior to his call to ministry (2 Chronicles 32:32), rose to a position within the court, as a recorder of historical records.
- F. Isaiah was married to a prophetess, and had at least two sons.
1. Shear – Jashub, meaning, “a remnant shall return”
 2. Maher- Shalal-Hash-Baz meaning, “speed the spoil, hasten the booties”
- His children were to be signs to the nation as their names predicted. First, the combined forces of Israel and Syria will not defeat Judah. Second Israel and Syria will fall to Assyria. Isaiah received his call to ministry after the death of Uzziah.
- G. The nation was benefiting from years of Godly leadership, but was on the brink of spiritual and moral collapse when God called Isaiah to His service. The key components of his calling were described in Isaiah 6:1-9:
1. A true vision of God
 2. A realization of sinfulness
 3. Conversion – blood stained coal
 4. Willingness to go
 5. Clear directive to go

II. Outline of Isaiah

Isaiah is the largest, by chapter count, of all the prophetic books. Because of its size, it is difficult to read in one sitting. For this reason, a simple outline can be helpful.

- A. The book naturally divides into two sections.
1. **Section 1** Chapters 1 – 39: Judgment
 - a. **Chapter 1** serves to introduce us to Isaiah and to the basic problem of his day.
 - vs. 3-4 brings an indictment against Judah and Jerusalem (backslidden)
 - vs. 11 People attempt to solve the problem with religious activities
 - vs. 18 a plea from the Lord to return. This is an oft repeated plea throughout Isaiah. We learn that going far from the Lord is not too far.
 - vs. 20 The consequences if the people refuse to return to God.

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- b. **Chapters 2--6** Is a word to Judah and Jerusalem.
 - c. **Chapter 6** Isaiah's call to ministry

 - d. **Chapter 7 – 12** A word to Israel and Samaria. Although Israel will fall, three great promises of the coming promises of the coming Messiah are given.
 - 7:14 a virgin will bring forth a son called Immanuel
 - 9:6 this child will be King forever
 - 11:1-2 He will have a Spirit empowered ministry
 - e. **Chapters 13--23** a word to the surrounding nations. This includes the prediction that Babylon would fall to the Medes over 150 years in advance of the event.
 - f. **Chapter's 24 – 27** A word to the whole world.
 - g. **Chapter's 28 – 33** A series of six woes spoken against Judah for their sins.
 - h. **Chapters 34 – 35** Another word to the nations
 - i. **Chapters 36 – 39** Judah is under attack. God miraculously delivers His people from the Assyrian army. This concludes the first major section of Isaiah.
2. **Section 2** Chapters 40 – 66 speak primarily of the coming Messiah and can easily be divided into three equal groups of nine.
- a. **Chapters 40 – 48** God is supreme. He is seen as above all gods. He promises to raise up Cyrus to defeat Babylon and return the Jews to their land.
 - b. **Chapters 49 – 57** Christ the Servant. Includes glorious sacrifice of Christ, clearly displayed in Chapter 53
 - c. **Chapters 58 – 66** The future Kingdom

III. Why Study Isaiah

Isaiah is worth our careful study, perhaps more than any other book in our study, thus far. We will limit our discourse to three main topics: Prophecies detailed description of Christ to Messiah, comfort for the believer.

A. Prophecies in Isaiah include but are not limited to:

- 1. Fall of Israel to Assyria
- 2. Fall of nations surrounding Babylon
- 3. Protection of Judah
- 4. Fall of Assyria to Babylon
- 5. Fall of Babylon to Medes; Isaiah 13:17 mentions the Medes. Isaiah 45:1-3 refers to Cyrus, King of the Medes, by name 150 years before his birth.

B. Prophecies also give a detailed descriptions of the messiah 700 years before Christ. These details would paint a portrait of the Messiah to ensure that Israel would recognize their Savior. The Messiah would be born of a virgin and bear the characteristics of God (Isaiah 7:14). He would be empowered by the Spirit of God for a ministry of miracles (Isaiah 11:1-2, Isaiah 61:1-2). He would suffer a horrific death for the sins of man, Chapters 50 & 53. Messiah will return to set up His kingdom (Isaiah 9:6). He will reign from the New Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4).

People from every tribe and nation will make pilgrimage to this spiritual capital of the world to worship YHWH. War will be a thing of the past as Christ reigns in righteous. His word will be the standard for His righteous reign (Isaiah 11:4). Peace will rule as the curse is removed from nature (Isaiah 11:6-9, 35:5). The whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9).

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C. Isaiah provides great comfort to the Christian. Peter referred to “great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4). Isaiah is filled with precious promises to guide, direct, comfort, strengthen and encourage the Christian on his journey toward glory.

2:18 gives an invitation to come back if we have fallen away

26:3 Promises perfect peace in the midst of the storms

32:16-17 Explains that peace flows from righteous living

41:10 God promises to hold us up

43:2 God promises to walk with us through the deepest trial

54:17 God promises to blot out our sin

54:17 God promises, since our sins are removed, no weapon of our enemy can harm us

Take time to find your own promises throughout the pages of Isaiah.

IV. Closing Thoughts

Isaiah is evangelistic. It is his desire the people come to the Lord and be saved

59:1-2 He explains the condition of man. We are sinners separated from God.

22:12-13 He explains the attitude of some who revel in their sin.

45:22 He explains the proper response.

If you have wandered from the Lord, now is the time to return.