

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH – A STUDY INTRODUCTION

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, ministered as a prophet to “Judah and Jerusalem” during the reigns of 4 kings of Judah: Uzziah (called “Azariah” in 2 Kings), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). Isaiah’s lengthy ministry began around 740 B.C., “in the year that king Uzziah died” (6:1; thus, possibly extending his ministry for 55 years, from beginning to end: 740-686 B.C.). The name “Isaiah” means, ‘Jehovah is salvation’, which many see as the central theme of the book.

Isaiah likely came from a family of means and importance since he had personal access to the king (7:3). His two sons, as well, bore symbolic names: “Shear-Jashub” (“a remnant shall return”; 7:3), and “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (“hast to the booty, hast to the soil”; 8:3)

Isaiah’s prophetic ministry closely paralleled that of Hosea (Hos. 1:1) and Micah (Mic. 1:1). However, “Isaiah’s writing style has no rival in its versatility of expression, brilliance of imagery, and richness of vocabulary,” and it is unequaled in its “greatness and transcendence of God.” Moreover, the sovereignty of God fills its pages (ex. ch. 45 and 46:9,10). Indeed, Isaiah is a gold mine of Biblical theology and prophecy.

Unquestionably, Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah, occupies the center of Isaiah oracles; for only the Psalms surpass Isaiah in messianic prophecies. In amazing fashion, the prophet traces the coming and life of the Lord Jesus in profound detail: from 1) His virgin birth and *divine nature*, to 2) His rejection by Israel and then His recommission by the Father, to 3) His sacrificial and substitutionary death as the Lamb of God, to 4) His exaltation and second coming in judgment and glory, and finally to 5) the establishment of His kingdom and His earthly rule and reign from Mount Zion. The glorious summit of the book, and perhaps of all the word of God, is located in chapter 53. In chapter 53, God’s suffering Servant becomes God’s sacrificial Lamb where God’s Love and Holiness are forever displayed.

“Isaiah is quoted directly in the New Testament over 65 times, far more than any other Old Testament prophet and mentioned by name over 20 times” (only the Psalms are quoted more often in the NT). In fact, Jesus Christ Himself mastered the scroll of Isaiah. He often quoted from it. Indeed, Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth, saying, “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*” (Luke 4:21; Jesus reads from Isa. 61:1). Additionally, Paul builds the book of Romans on the vocabulary and theology of Isaiah with 16 direct quotations. Peter, as well, references Isaiah repeatedly in 1 Peter; and, each of the four gospel writers appeal to material from Isaiah (Ex. Matthew quotes Isaiah 9 times). As such, it is nearly impossible to overstate the importance and value of the book of Isaiah to every generation and to every serious student of the Bible.

Isaiah was called to his prophetic ministry as the Assyrian empire began to challenge Egypt and to rise as the new international power. It was during his ministry that Assyria captured Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, and carried away many of its people into captivity (2 Kings 17:6, 24). Sometime later, it was this same Assyrian empire that threatened to do the same to Jerusalem, but God miraculously intervened. At the close of Isaiah's ministry, he foresaw the rise of Babylon; again, another new international power (39:6,7), and their coming judgment on Judah and exile *to Babylon*. Indeed, the entire second division of Isaiah, chapters 40 -66, are prophetic visions that foretell of Judah and the southern kingdom *already* in Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah, by some, is called "the prince of the prophets." He spoke to a people and to a generation that had no ears or heart to hear the word of God (6:8-12). But Isaiah faithfully followed the LORD's call. In the end, the historical record recounts that Manasseh had Isaiah tied to two boards and sawn in two (see Heb. 11:37; this may be a reference to Isaiah). Surely, he had "an abundant entrance into glory."

The book of Isaiah is an unending treasure. Indeed, understanding Isaiah is critical to a full and accurate understanding of the entire word of God.

TWO GENERAL DIVISIONS:

<u>Chapters 1 – 39</u>	<i>Historical</i>	<u>Chapters 40 - 66</u>
<u>Assyrian Invasion</u>	<u>Bridge</u>	<u>Babylonian Captivity</u>
JUDGMENT & Comfort	<36-37	SALVATION & Comfort
Immanuel - <i>The Child</i>	38-39>	Messiah - <i>The Servant</i> (4 Servant Songs)

A SUMMARY OUTLINE of the SCROLL of ISAIAH:

"*Isaiah*" – 'Jehovah is Salvation'

I. (1-39) Salvation from **ASSYRIAN Invasion** – As a Foretaste of the **Day of the LORD**

The "JUDGMENT" of God (Cf. Psalms 96 – 98)

- A. Chs. 1 – 6; Introductory Prophecies (1-5); Isaiah's Vision and Call (6)
- B. Chs. 7 – 12; ASSYRIAN Invasion and the LORD's Deliverance, & the Wonder Child
- C. Chs. 13 – 23; Isaiah's Prophetic Messages Against Babylon & 10 Gentile Nations
- D. Chs. 24 – 35; God's Judgment on the *Whole* Earth & His *Saving* Work in Israel

E. Chs. 36 – 39; An *Amazing* Historical Bridge: Assyrian's Demise & *Babylon's* Rise

II. (40-66) Salvation from **BABYLONIAN** *Captivity* – A Foretaste of the **Day of the LORD**

The “*SALVATION*” of God (Psalm 2, Psalm 24, et al; and, the *Servant of the LORD*)

A. Chs. 40 – 48; BABYLONIAN Deliverance (43:14; 44:28; 46:1; 47:1; 48:20)

B. Chs. 49 – 57; *SPIRITUAL* Deliverance (49:1-6, Foretold; 52:13f, **Accomplished!**)

C. Chs. 58 – 66; ISRAEL'S *Final* Deliverance (Redemption! 59:20; 60:1; 61:1; 63:15)

Hallelujah! What A SAVIOR!! Hallelujah! What A SALVATION!!

FIRST SERIES of BIBLE STUDIES in ISAIAH – Chapters 1-12:

Chs 1-12: Salvation from **ASSYRIAN *Invasion* – As a Foretaste of the Day of the LORD**

1-6: Introductory Prophecies (1-5); Isaiah's Vision and Call (6)

Prophetic Oracle #1 (1:2 – 31).

God's Plan for Israel Revealed (Divine Overview)

Prophetic Oracle #2 (2:1 – 4:6).

The *Day of the Lord* Introduced (God's Wrath, Israel's Restoration)

The Song of the Vineyard & 6 Woes for the Wicked - ch. 5

Isaiah's Call and Commission - ch. 6

7-12: ASSYRIAN Invasion and the LORD's Deliverance: the *Wonder Child*

Prophetic Oracle #3 (7:1 - 9:7).

House of *David* in Jeopardy and the Sign of the Child: *Immanuel* – ch. 7

The *Assyrian* Invasion Prophesied – ch. 8

The Everlasting *Davidic King* and Kingdom – ch. 9:1-7

Prophetic Oracle #4 (9:8 – 12:6).

God's Stretched-Out Hand of Judgment – ch. 9:8 – 10:34

A Spirit-Anointed *Branch* from the Stump of Jesse – ch. 11

The Delivered Remnant's *Song of Salvation* – ch. 12

CHAPTER 1 of ISAIAH – An OVERVIEW

The Open Chapter is in a Courtroom Setting in the Heavens.

GOD Himself Sits as **JUDGE** (cf. Gen. 18:25), and ...

GOD is the *Plaintiff*

GOD is the *Prosecutor*

Jerusalem and Judah *stand in Judgment*

“*Heaven and Earth*” are called to *Witness* (as they did in Deut. 32:1)

“Chapter 1 forms a fitting introduction to the entire book. It contains a summary of the major themes developed by Isaiah.” (Herbert Wolf, “*Interpreting Isaiah*,” p.73)

An OUTLINE (#1):

- 1:1, The Preface
- 1:2, The Heavenly *Court Assembled* and the JUDGE Seated
- 1:3-6 The *Charges* Brought Against the Nation
- 1:7-9 A *Vision* Depicts the Devastating Judgment Their Rebellion Will Bring
- 1:10-15 The Worthlessness of Their *Religious Acts*: Sacrifices, Worship, and Prayers
- 1:16-20 The *Only Way* to Mercy and Forgiveness: True Repentance
- 1:21-31 The *Verdict Rendered*: Judgment Pronounced, *But Restoration After* Promised

An OUTLINE (#2):

Herbert Wolf – “Interpreting Isaiah”

A. The Sinfulness of the Nation, 1-15

B. God’s Invitation to Repentance, 18-20

C. The Prediction of both Judgment and Salvation, 24-31