

Introduction to The Book of Isaiah

Historical Setting:

You will recall that the nation divided after the death of Solomon; ten tribes in the north were organized as Israel, and two tribes in the south as Judah. The capital of Israel was Samaria; the capital of Judah was Jerusalem. Isaiah ministered in Jerusalem, but his messages touched both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms. Isaiah lived to see Israel (the Northern Kingdom) decline and finally go into captivity to Assyria.

The political scene was threatening to Judah at that time. Assyria was the menacing power and the other nations wanted to form a coalition to fight her. However, King Ahaz of Judah would not join the league. So, Syria and Israel united to attack Judah to try to force Ahaz to cooperate. Instead of trusting the Lord for help, Ahaz turned to Assyria for assistance and made a secret pact. Assyria was only too glad to get her foot in the door; she defeated Israel in 721 B.C., but Judah became a vassal state to Assyria, the price Ahaz had to pay for his security.

No sooner was Israel out of the way than Assyria decided to attack Judah and enslave the entire Jewish nation. Isaiah told the people to trust the Lord for help, but various groups told the king to turn to Egypt for aid. In chapters 36–39, Isaiah tells how God gave King Hezekiah victory over Assyria when the invading army was at the very walls of Jerusalem. However, Judah was so weakened from war, and her cities had been so overrun by the enemy, that the nation never really recovered.

Assyria was defeated by the Egyptians; the Egyptians fell to the Babylonians; and in 606–587 B.C., the Babylonians took Judah into captivity. So, in the first half of his book, Isaiah counseled the nation concerning Assyria; in the last half, he comforted the remnant concerning their return from Babylon.

The author of Isaiah

Isaiah, the “St. Paul of the Old Testament,” was evidently from a distinguished Jewish family. His education is evident in his impressive vocabulary and style. His work is comprehensive in scope and beautifully communicated. Isaiah maintained close contact with the royal court, but his exhortations against alliances with foreign powers were not always well received.

Isaiah had friendly interviews with kings Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa 7; 37).

Isaiah was a historiographer at the Judean Court in Jotham's reign, and wrote accounts of the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (2Chr 26:22; 32:32).

Isaiah was married, (His wife was a prophetess, Isa 8:3) and had 2 sons Shear-Jashub (“A remnant shall return”) and Maher-Shalal-Has (“Haste to the spoil”) Isa 7:3; 8:3.

He ministers in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah (Isa 1:1) he prophesied for some 60 years.

Jewish tradition says that he lived into the reign of Manasseh, under whom he suffered a horrible martyrdom for resisting the wicked King's doings. He was placed in a hollow trunk of a tree and then sawn into (Heb 11:37).

Name:

“Isaiah” means “the salvation of Jehovah,” (just like Jesus name also means “the salvation of Jehovah”) and the word salvation is repeated many times in the book.

Theme:

Salvation and consolation after God's judgment.

The main theme of the first section (chapters 1 – 39) is God's chastening of Judah for their sins, while the main theme of the second section (chapters 40 – 66) is God's consolation of the captives after their suffering.

Key Word: Salvation Is of the Lord

The basic theme of this book is found in Isaiah's name: "Salvation Is of the Lord." The word "salvation" appears twenty-six times in Isaiah but only seven times in all the other prophets combined. Chapters 1–39 portray man's great need for salvation, and chapters 40–66 reveal God's great provision of salvation. Salvation is of God, not man; and He is seen as the supreme Ruler, the sovereign Lord of history, and the only Savior. Isaiah solemnly warns Judah of approaching judgment because of moral depravity, political corruption, social injustice, and especially spiritual idolatry. Because the nation does not turn away from its sinful practice, Isaiah announces the ultimate overthrow of Judah. Nevertheless, God will remain faithful to His covenant by preserving a godly remnant and promises salvation and deliverance through the coming Messiah. The Savior will come out of Judah and accomplish the dual work of redemption and restoration. The Gentiles will come to His light and universal blessing will finally take place.

Key Verses:

Isaiah 9:6-7 "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"

53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all".

Key Chapter: Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 lists the most remarkable and specific prophecies of the atonement of the Messiah. Fulfilling each clear prophecy, the Jewish nation later proved the messiahship of Jesus.

Structure of Isaiah:

It has been suggested that Isaiah's book is like a "Bible in miniature." Its sixty-six chapters are divided into two parts, thirty-nine chapters in the first division (like the OT) and twenty-seven chapters in the second division (like the NT). The first thirty-nine chapters emphasize judgment; the last twenty-seven emphasize mercy and comfort.

BIBLE - 66 Books	ISAIAH - 66 Chapters
Old Testament - 39 Books	Chapters 1-39 = Law, Government of God
New Testament - 27 Books	Chapters 40-66 = Grace, Salvation of God

There are sixty-six direct quotations from Isaiah in the New Testament. (Some have found eighty-five quotations and allusions to Isaiah in the New Testament.) Twenty of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament have direct quotations. Isaiah is woven into the New Testament as a brightly colored thread is woven into a beautiful pattern. Isaiah is discernible and conspicuous in the New Testament. Isaiah is chiseled into the rock of the New Testament with the power tool of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah is often used to enforce and enlarge upon the New Testament passages that speak of Christ.

Isaiah is like a miniature Bible. The first thirty-nine chapters (like the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament) are filled with judgment upon immoral and idolatrous men. Judah has sinned; the surrounding nations have sinned; the whole earth has sinned. Judgment must come, for God cannot

allow such blatant sin to go unpunished forever. But the final twenty-seven chapters (like the twenty-seven books of the New Testament) declare a message of hope. The Messiah is coming as a Savior and a Sovereign to bear a cross and to wear a crown.

Christ in Isaiah

When he speaks about Christ, Isaiah sounds more like a New Testament writer than an Old Testament prophet. His messianic prophecies are clearer and more explicit than those in any other Old Testament book. They describe many aspects of the Person and work of Christ in His first and second advents, and often blend the two together.

Here are a few of the Christological prophecies with their New Testament fulfillments:

Isaiah	New Testament
7:14	Mt 1:22-23
9:1-2	Mt 4:12-16
9:6	Lk 2:11; Eph 2:14-18
11:1	Lk 3:23-32; Ac 13:22-23
11:2	Lk 3:22
28:16	1Pt 2:4-6
40:3-5	Mt 3:1-3
42:1-4	Mt 12:15-21
42:6	Lk 2:29-32
50:6	Mt 26:67; 27:26, 30
52:14	Phil 2:7-11
53:3	Lk 23:18; Jn 1:11; 7:5
53:4-5	Rom 5:6-8
53:7	Mt 27:12-14; Jn 1:29; 1Pt 1:18-19
53:9	Mt 27:57-60
53:12	Mk 15:28
61:1-2	Lk 4:17-19; 21

Isaiah's messianic prophecies that await fulfillment in the Lord's second advent include:

4:2; 11:2-6, 10; 32:1-8; 49:7; 52:13, 15; 59:20, 21; 60:1-3; 61:2, 3.

The wrath and mercy of God

Rom 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

The cross of Jesus sets the believer free from the wrath of God.

Rom 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

1Thes 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1Thes 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Those, not in Christ, are still under the wrath of God and will experience it in eternity.

Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Rom 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Rom 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Condensed Outline of Isaiah:

The Book of Isaiah divides itself into two sections, chapters 1–39 and chapters 40–66.

The first section warns the Jews about the impending Assyrian invasion of Judah.

The second section encourages the captives returning from the Babylonian captivity.

I. Condemnation (1–39) (The defeat of Assyria)

- A. Sermons against Judah and Israel (1–12)
- B. Burdens of judgment on the other nations (13–23)
- C. Songs of future glory for the nation (24–27)
- D. Woes against the sins of the people (28–35)
- E. Historical Interlude (36–39) (King Hezekiah)
 - 1. His victory over Assyria (36–37)
 - 2. His sin with Babylon (38–39)

II. Consolation (40–66) (The remnant returns home)

- A. God's Greatness (40–48)
 - The true God vs. the false gods of the heathen.
 - Emphasis on the Father, Jehovah God.
- B. God's Grace (49–57)
 - The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, dies for men.
 - Emphasis on the Son, Jesus Christ.
- C. God's Glory (58–66)
 - The glory of the future kingdom.
 - Emphasis on the Spirit (59:19, 21; 61:1; 63:10–14).

References Used:

Thru the Bible commentary (by J. Vernon McGee)
The Open Bible
Faith Life Study Bible
Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament