

JOURNEYS THROUGH THE BIBLE

#19. ISAIAH

1. **Isaiah** was a prophet to Judah whose message was designed to call the faltering nation back to God and give them hope through the announcement of the coming Messianic Kingdom.
2. **The author is Isaiah, son of Amoz.** He lived until 681 B.C. when he was put to death by King Manasseh, who ruled from 695-642 BC. Tradition says he was cut in two by a wooden saw. His death may be referred to in Hebrews 11:37. His ministry covered the period from 739-681 B.C.

Isaiah's ministry is associated with five kings of Judah. Four of whom are identified closely with the prophet's ministry (1:1). By the time of Manasseh, Isaiah's ministry is coming to a close, but not before the aging prophet endured a final encounter with Manasseh.

During the reign of Uzziah, Israel prospered materially, but continued a slow decline spiritually. Uzziah's days of glory were marred by his attempt to usurp the ministry and spiritual authority of the Priests for himself. In a moment of rebellion, he was judged with leprosy, from which he never recovered (2 Kings 15; 2 Chronicles 26).

The next king, Jotham (750-731 B.C.) was successful economically, but failed to bring Judah back around to spiritual purity (2 Kings 15; 2 Chronicles 27).

Jotham son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, ruled from about 735 B.C. until 715 B.C. Under his reign, Judah faced nearly continual war with Assyria as well as with other neighboring countries. He also allowed an idol to be set up in Solomon's Temple (2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28).

Hezekiah, who reigned from 715 B.C. until 686 B.C., led Israel in great reform. Partnering with Isaiah, he helped save Judah from Assyrian threat, popularized the concept of a righteous "remnant, and led the nation into revival.

Manasseh was a wicked king in his early years, and Jewish tradition attributes the death of Isaiah to him in 681 B.C.

3. The Date of Isaiah's writing is probably about 700 B.C.

4. Key Chapters

- **Chapters 1 through 39** - are words of Judgment against Judah, Israel and surrounding nations. It also deals with certain events during the reign of King Hezekiah. Though Judah had a form of Godliness, they were going deeper each year into apostasy.

- **Chapters 40 through 66** - are words of comfort assurance Judah of release from captivity. The prophet also announced the coming Messiah and His Kingdom.

5. Key Verses

- **Isaiah 7:14 NIV** - “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin[will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”
- **Isaiah 53:1-6 NIV** - “Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- **Isaiah 59:1,2 NIV** - “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”
- **Isaiah 60:1-3 NIV** - “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

6. Key People

- **Isaiah** - Son of Amoz, and a prophet from Jerusalem. He ministered primarily during the reigns of Uzziah (aka Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah's family was apparently upper class, evidenced by the fact that he seemed to have considerable access to the King (7:3). He was married to a prophetess and had two sons who bore prophetic names (Shear-jashub, cited in 7:3 - “a remnant shall return; and Maher-shalal-hashbaz, named in 8:3 - “hastening to the spoil” or “moving quickly to the prey”). He was a contemporary of Micah and Hosea. 2 Chronicles indicates that he also wrote a biography of King Hezekiah (32:32).

Concerning the brilliance of Isaiah's writing style, John MacArthur observes Isaiah's use of 2,186 different words, compared to roughly 1500 in Ezekiel and

about 1700 in Jeremiah.¹

- **Hezekiah** - One of the great Reformer Kings of Judah. He ruled from 725-686 B.C.
- **Messiah** - Although Messiah is not actual seen in Isaiah, He is predicted with great clarity in the second half of the book. Isaiah gives us arguably the clearest Old Testament portrayal of Jesus.

8. **Key Places** - the prophet was a resident of Jerusalem, and his ministry was centered there.

9. Key Themes

- ***The Judgment of Jehovah is certain.***
 - *Consistent with the message of other prophets, Isaiah portrays the people of God as wayward sheep who have all gone astray (53:6).*
- ***The Salvation of the Lord is our Hope.***
 - *God will not abandon His flock! Though we are wayward sheep, the prophet assures us that the penalty for our sin and the price of our redemption is through the atonement of the Lord's Messiah (53:4-6).*
- ***Messiah is coming!***
 - *The Prince of Peace who rules with true righteousness is coming with comfort, deliverance and restoration in the Messianic Kingdom.*

10. The Contents of Isaiah

- ***The Judgment of the Lord is Pronounced (1:1-35:10)***
 - ***The sins of Judah and Jerusalem (1:1-12:6)***
 - *Social sins (1:1-6:13)*
 - *Political entanglements (7:1-12:6)*
 - ***Judgment upon Jerusalem and nine surrounding nations (13:1-23:18)***
 - *Babylon and Assyria (13:1-14:27)*
 - *Philistia (14:28-32)*

¹ MacArthur, John; The MacArthur Bible Commentary; Thomas Nelson Publishers; Nashville, 2005; page 755.

- *Moab (15:1-16:14)*
- *Syria and Israel (17:1-14)*
- *Ethiopia (18:1-7)*
- *Egypt (19:1-20:6)*
- *Second address to Babylon (21:1-10)*
- *Edom (21:11,12)*
- *Arabia (21:13-17)*
- *Jerusalem (22:1-25)*
- *Tyre (23:1-18)*
- ***World-wide judgment is coming (24:1-27:13)***
 - *The earth will be devastated (24:1-23)*
 - *The first redemption praise song (25:1-12)*
 - *The second redemption praise song (26:1-19)*
 - *The chastisement and final redemption of Israel (26:20-27:13)*
- ***Do not put your trust in Egypt (28:1-35:10)***
 - *Woes upon drunken politicians (28:1-29)*
 - *Woes upon religious hypocrites (29:1-14)*
 - *Woes upon the deceivers (29:15-24)*
 - *Woes upon those who trust in Egypt (30:1-33)*
 - *Woes upon those whose trust is in chariots and horses (31:1-32:20)*
 - *Woes upon Assyrian aggressors (33:1-24)*
 - *A cry for justice against Edom (34:1-35:10)*
- ***Hezekiah's encounter with Assyria and Babylon (36:1-39:8)***
 - *Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem (36:1-37:38)*
 - *Hezekiah's illness and recovery (38:1-22)*
 - *Babylon sends spies to Jerusalem (39:1-8)*
- ***Salvation from The Lord (40:1-66:24)***
 - *Deliverance from Captivity (40:1-48:22)*
 - *Comfort to the Exiles (40:1-31)*
 - *The end of Israel's trouble (41:1-48:22)*
 - *The Sufferings of Messiah (49:1-57:21)*
 - *Messiah's mission (49:1-52:12)*
 - *Redemption by Messiah (52:13-57:21)*
 - *The Future Glory of God's People (58:1-66:24)*
- **Worth noting:**
 - Isaiah is the first book in the writing designated as The Prophets. Prophets were not just foretellers of the future, they were regarded as "spokespersons for God." They delivered messages reflecting the heart of Jehovah.

- Dates of the ministry of each canonical (writing) prophet is as follows:
 - Obadiah wrote to Edom - 850-840 B.C.
 - Joel wrote to Judah - 835-796 B.C.
 - Jonah wrote to Israel about his mission to Nineveh (Assyria) - 784-760 B.C.
 - Amos wrote to Israel - 763-755 B.C.
 - Hosea wrote to Israel - 755-710 B.C.
 - Isaiah wrote to Judah - 739-761 B.C.
 - Micah wrote to Judah - 735-710 B.C.
 - Nahum wrote to Nineveh (Assyria) - 650-630 B.C.
 - Zephaniah wrote to Judah - 635-625 B.C.
 - Jeremiah wrote to Judah - 627-570 B.C.
 - Habakkuk wrote to Judah - 620-605 B.C.
 - Daniel wrote to the Exiled Jews and those remaining in the land - 605-536 B.C.
 - Ezekiel wrote to Judah and the Babylonian Exiles - 593-570 B.C.
 - Haggai wrote to Judah - 520-505 B.C.
 - Zechariah wrote to Judah - 520-470 B.C.
 - Malachi wrote to returned exiles (primarily Judah) - 437-417 B.C.

- Isaiah is quoted directly in the New Testament about 65 times, far more than any other Old Testament writer, and is mentioned by name over 20 times.

- Isaiah gives us a unique perspective on “salvation”. Used mostly in the Psalms and in Isaiah, the term is most frequently used to describe deliverance from trouble and consequential prosperity and well being. Often used to describe a military victory over an oppressive enemy, the term is also linked with the idea of righteousness, and is often referred to as “the salvation of The LORD”.

- For an excellent discussion of how to read the prophetic books , see ***How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*** by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart (Zondervan Publishers). Chapter 10 is especially helpful (“Prophecy: Enforcing the Covenanting Israel”).²

² pages 181-204 in the Third Edition

- **When reading the Book of Isaiah:**

- Remember that Isaiah saw firsthand the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. The continuing threat of Assyria and the looming power of Babylon set the stage for much of his prophecy.
- Remember that Isaiah is communicating God's heart to redeem all nations , not just Israel (2:2;52:15).
- Hope is a strong central message. Judah had witnessed the destruction and captivity of her sister nation in 722 B.C. Their Messianic hope was centered around a truly righteous king, who would also be a redeeming servant of God. All of their hope will be fulfilled in Jesus!