



The Book of Isaiah: Introduction - Part 1

Author: Isaiah the Seer-Prophet

Audience: Originally Israel, but these revelations speak to everyone

Date: 740–700 BC

Type of Literature: Prophetic literature

Major Themes: The Bible in one book; judgment for rebellion; vindication for God's people; redemption hope; the Messiah unveiled

Four Categories the Prophets Speak To:

1. Indictment
2. Judgement
3. Instruction
4. Aftermath

Prophets: Don't just predict the FUTURE, but they are charged with proclaiming the PLAN of God (Includes past, present and future). They are **champions** of the covenant.

Outline:

- Yahweh's Vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem — 1:1 Thru 5: 30 (5)
- The Vision and Prophetic Call of Isaiah — 6:1–13 (1)
- Yahweh's Signs, Judgment, and Deliverance — 7:1 thru 12: 6 (6)
- Yahweh's Judgments of the Nations — 13:1 thru 23:18 (11)
- Yahweh's Victory Over the Nations — 24:1 thru 27:13 (4)
- The False Hope of Trusting the Nations — 28:1 thru 33:24 (6)
- Enemies Judged, the Redeemed Return — 34:1 thru 35:10 (2)
- The Vision concerning Hezekiah — 36:1 thru 39:8 (4)

- The Vision concerning God's Promises — 40:1 thru 48:22 (9)
- The Vision concerning Redemption and Restoration — 49:1 thru 55:13 (7)
- Yahweh, Our Judge and Redeemer — 56:1 thru 66:24 (11)

ABOUT ISAIAH

Isaiah, the first of the major prophets, was the prophet of Zion. He was not just a teacher or preacher but a seer and intercessor for God's people.

You are about to enter a vision-zone of heaven descending upon the earth. Let's study the vision of a man who saw the glory of God and now speaks with burning lips. True prophetic ministry flows from this vision until it grows into a burden. With a blast of newly released Spirit-wind, Isaiah now speaks for God with fire-touched lips. He speaks about the supernatural reality of Yahweh breaking into the reality of this world in order to impart to his people insights into his loving heart and wise plan.

The book of Isaiah is one enormous collection of prophecies (the longest in the Bible) described as the vision (Heb. *chazown*). This word is a descriptive term for the entire supernatural revelation given by God to Isaiah. It is not simply teaching or an historical record; it is the overarching vision of the heart of God revealed to his seer-prophet. This vision spans the plan of the ages. It becomes a collective overview of all that God has planned. It takes us beyond the days of Isaiah, even beyond our own times, bringing us into the council chambers of eternity, revealing the unfolding plan of an all-wise God. The vision did not belong to Isaiah; it is the Lord's vision for a people raised up on the earth who will reflect his glory.

The documents of Isaiah are among the most reliable of all the Old Testament. We even have a copy of the book that dates to 100 BC thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. They predate the next oldest extant copy by nearly one thousand years, and very little variation in the manuscripts was found. So we can be confident as we read Isaiah's inspired prophecies that we are gazing upon the truth of the ages.

The apostle John writes, "Isaiah said these things because he had seen and experienced the splendor of Jesus and prophesied about him." (John 12: 41). Isaiah was taken into heaven's throne room and saw the Son of God as the Lord on the throne. The "Lord high and exalted" is Jesus Christ before he became a man. Here's how Peter described the ministry of the prophets, including Isaiah:

This salvation was the focus of the prophets who prophesied of this outpouring of grace that was destined for you. They made a careful search and investigation of the meaning of their God-given prophecies as they probed into the mysteries of who would fulfill them and the time period when it would all take place. The Spirit of the Anointed One was in them and was pointing prophetically to the sufferings that Christ was destined to suffer and the glories that would be released afterward. God revealed to the prophets that their ministry was not for their own benefit but for yours. And now, you have heard these things from the evangelists who preached the gospel to you through the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—the gospel containing wonderful mysteries that even the angels long to get a glimpse of. (1 Peter 1:10–12)

The poetic message of Isaiah is the glorious message of overcoming, hope, comfort, and the restoration of all things. Because of Christ's appearing with love for all the world, Isaiah's words are now seen as clear prophetic insights into the death, resurrection, and glory of our King. To see him in every chapter of Isaiah will be the key to

unlocking its deep prophetic mystery to our hearts. Read it with joy and passion to discover the Beloved—you will find him!

PURPOSE

The scope of this book touches every nation on the earth today. The prophecies of Isaiah are addressed not only to the citizens of the eighth century BC but to the inhabitants of the whole earth—“with all of us who are alive here today” (Deut. 5:3). He was commissioned by the Lord through supernatural revelation to proclaim the vision containing divine insight into impending judgment for sins, coming comfort for future destruction, and the hope of eventual redemption. Significant to the church in these last days is his prophetic insight into the person and work of Jesus—the Faithful Servant, Chosen Servant, Teacher-Servant, and Suffering Servant.

With panoramic insight, Isaiah preaches about the virgin birth of Christ and the virgin Bride of Christ. We read prophecies of the new thing God delights in doing and the New Jerusalem God delights to dwell in. We see Christ Jesus as the Man of Sorrows and the Conquering King. Isaiah’s burning message is not only for the future, it is for now.

With their vast and grand themes, Isaiah’s prophecies are unrivaled in all of Scripture. They present to us a description of cataclysmic judgments, the survival of a holy remnant, and the canopy of glory that is coming to earth. A cleansed, holy people will emerge in Zion. They will be the outgrowth of the one called the Branch, and they will possess his glory and his beauty. These revelation insights assure us that we can trust Lord Yahweh with our present suffering and future restoration.

AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE

Isaiah, an educated and prominent man in the nation of Israel, was married to a prophetess (8:3) and had two sons, named She’ar-Ya’shuv, meaning “a remnant will return” (7:3) and the younger, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, meaning “Quickly—to the plunder! Hurry—to the loot!” (8:3).

Historian and church father Jerome says of Isaiah, “He was more of an evangelist than a prophet because he presented the mysteries of the church of Christ so vividly.” How true! In Isaiah 53 Isaiah brings us a clear presentation of Jesus as the Savior and the crucified one. John Wesley concluded, “Undoubtedly he was the prince of all the prophets.” About Isaiah’s prophetic book he wrote, “He so evidently and fully describes the person, and offices, and sufferings, and kingdom of Christ, that some of the ancients called him the fifth Evangelist.”

Isaiah the seer-prophet is indeed a fifth evangelist, making his prophetic work a fifth gospel, for he reveals the hidden mysteries of Lord Yahweh’s good news. These mysteries were unveiled first before the people of God, at once confronting them and the nations with future doom and encouraging them with future glory. Ultimately, Isaiah’s evangelistic prophecy is meant for all the world, unveiling before it the beauty and majesty, hope and expectations, of Messiah Jesus.

MAJOR THEMES

The Bible in One Book. Isaiah is like the entire Bible in that there are sixty-six books of inspired Scripture and sixty-six chapters in Isaiah.

The first thirty-nine books of the Bible comprise the Old Testament, or what our Jewish friends call “the Covenant.” The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah parallel the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. Both include

woes, judgment, and promises; there is a focus on the Hebrew people and their history; and the destined future of God's people is unveiled. The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah in many ways mirror the last twenty-seven books of the Bible, what we call the New Testament—beginning with Isaiah 40 and the prophecy of John the Baptizer as a “thundering voice shouting in the desert” (John 1:23), heralding the coming of the Messiah, who brings the message of life and hope. You could consider your journey through Isaiah like taking a journey through the entire Bible, for both end with God making all things new, including giving us a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 66:22; see also Rev. 21–22).

If you were to take the whole Bible and squeeze it into one book, you would end up with the prophecy of Isaiah. It is truly the Bible in miniature. Both Jesus and Paul quote Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book. If you really want to know your Bible, read Isaiah! Judgment for the Rebellious. From the beginning, the vision unveils a major theme that courses throughout this prophetic work:

Judgment for the rebellious. All are corrupt, having stubbornly continued in their rebellion from the bottom of their feet to the top of their heads. Lord Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, has issued prophetic utterances of judgment against human beings, from the leaders of Sodom to the people of Gomorrah, from the Philistines to the Moabites, from Egypt to Babylon. In stirring, graphic language, Isaiah prophesied the day of Lord Yahweh, a period when he would punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins. In the day of his fierce anger, the heavens will shudder and the earth will shake from its foundations.

This outpouring of corrective wrath is reserved not only for the nations who have turned their backs on Lord Yahweh but for God's people who have despised the Holy One of Israel. Israel and Judah had become estranged and alienated from God, offering defiled sacrifices and tainted worship. More significant, they exchanged worship of the Holy One of Israel for worthless idols of wood and stone. The covenant Israel entered into with Yahweh was broken by their idolatry and unbelief. It was as though God's children disowned their Father. And destruction was promised for such arrogance. Yes, God is love and longs to pour out his love upon his people, those he has chosen and established as his own. Yet God is holy, and although in mercy he may delay judgment, he will judge his people.

Remarkably, even during devastation and judgment, God calls his people the “daughter of Zion” (Isa. 1:8). God's people are his daughter, born out of Zion, the holy realm. Instead of being his dwelling place, they became like a flimsy hut. The work of God, as seen in the book of Isaiah, was to restore this “hut” to a dwelling place of divine shelter through his refining fire. Even the besieged city will one day become the New Jerusalem, where God and humanity mingle as one.

The Hope of Vindication and Redemption. Favor and mercy always triumph over judgment. God will excel in grace toward his people and give them back even more than what sins spoiled and Satan stole. There is coming a day when Lord Yahweh will wield his massive, mighty sword and take up our cause, slaying the serpent of confusion and working a mighty work of vindication from enemies and redemption from sins in the lives of his people. He is our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Mighty One who unveils to us his cherishing love like a relative coming to the aid of his next-of-kin in trouble to redeem and rescue them. He loves us so much that he took upon this role of family protector, becoming the sacrifice to rescue us from danger and return us to God.

God is a God of restoration, even for those who have miserably failed him. He has always had a remnant people, a “holy seed” of survivors who will spring up through his mercy, even in a time of judgment. Today, true believers have the holy seed of Christ within us, for we have been born from above. The remnant is an important theme found in the messages of the prophets, especially Isaiah. The theology of God preserving a remnant meant so much to Isaiah that he named one of his sons Shear-Jashub, “a remnant will return” (7:3). The remnant of the

lovers of God who have taken hold of one Man (Jesus) will be sheltered and protected, even in a time of judgment.

This vindication and redemption is encapsulated in three songs in the book of Isaiah:

1. The Song of Praise for the Redeemed (ch. 12)
2. The Joyful Song of the Redeemed (35:1–10)
3. The Song of Salvation (52:7–12).

In each, the children of God are invited to praise Lord Yahweh for turning away his anger and offering tender comfort; for breaking through and giving us victory, avenging our enemies with the salvation of divine retribution; for the beautiful message announcing peace and happiness; and for the unveiling of Lord Yahweh's saving power before all the nations. Praise is a vital component of Isaiah's teachings on redemption. If we ourselves don't praise, creation will in our place!

The Hebrew word for salvation is *yěshuw'ah*, and it is found in Isaiah twenty-eight times. It is similar to the Hebrew name of Jesus: *Yeshua*. Redemption is God's last word, not judgment. To know Jesus is to know the God of salvation who sent him (John 14:9). Through him, the Suffering Servant, our salvation was accomplished as he was rejected and mocked, pierced and crushed, bruised and punished. punished. "Like wayward sheep, we have all wandered astray," Isaiah writes prophetically. "Each of us has turned from God's paths and chosen our own way; even so, Yahweh laid the guilt of our every sin upon him" (53:6), unlocking the door of hope leading to redemption.

Unveiling the Messiah. Finally, the vision offers us prophetic insights into the most important theme of Scripture: the Messiah. More than any other place in God's Word, divine revelation concerning Lord Yahweh's Anointed One is poured out here for the benefit of God's people. Just consider all of the mysteries unveiled before us through this seer-prophet:

Isaiah 7 promises the world a sign from Lord Yahweh himself: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will name him God Among Us" (v. 14). There is nothing miraculous about a young woman having a baby; it happens every day. However, Matthew quotes this prophetic word for the virgin birth of the Messiah (Matt. 1:23). No child with a human father could be the fulfillment of Immanuel, God among us.

In chapter 9, Isaiah is prophesying the ministry of Jesus that would reverse the curse through the radiance of his light shining upon the places where devastation has robbed us of hope. This glorious light includes Jesus' teachings, his miracles, and the pure life he lived before the Father. Jesus Christ is a light of rescue for the lost, comfort for the hurting, wholeness for the broken, and escape for the captive. He is the light of joy, the light of revelation, the light of deliverance. Isaiah prophesied that as the light of Jesus shines on the earth it will bring in a harvest of joy and rejoicing.

The first five verses of chapter 11 unveil several aspects of the Messiah. He would be from David's lineage. He is the stump of Jesse, the fruitful Branch. He would have the sevenfold Spirit of God resting upon him: the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of Extraordinary Wisdom, the Spirit of Perfect Understanding, the Spirit of Wise Strategy, the Spirit of Mighty Power, the Spirit of Revelation, and the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. His government would be equitable and full of righteousness, and it would demonstrate his loyalty to God. Jesus fulfills all of these attributes completely as the long-awaited Branch-Messiah of Lord Yahweh.

Isaiah 42 introduces to us the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, as the chosen servant of the Lord, sustained by Yahweh, sent on a divine mission to bring light and freedom to the hearts of his covenant people. Starting with chapter 42, Isaiah gives us four Servant Songs:

1. This chapter presents him as the Faithful Servant who brings light to the nations.
2. In 49:1–13 he is the Chosen Servant to bring salvation to the nations and to restore Israel.
3. In 50:4–9, we have the song of the Obedient Servant who reveals the Father.
4. In 52:13–53:12 we find the Suffering Servant. These songs comprise a capstone of divine revelation unveiling the Messiah.

All of the prophetic writings have the power to change you. They change our outlook toward the future, they give us prophetic meaning for the past, and they empower us to live holy lives today. Read Isaiah to be transformed and watch God change your life.

* Brian Simmons. **The Book of Isaiah: *The Vision***. BroadStreet Publishing Group LLC.

