

A photograph of a stone archway made of large, weathered blocks. The arch frames a view of a bright blue sky, a turquoise ocean with white waves, and a sandy beach. The foreground shows the rough, textured stone blocks of the arch's base.

Isaiah

Prophesied To Five Kings

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Overview

ISAIAH WAS ACTIVE AS A PROPHET DURING THE REIGNS OF FIVE KINGS

Isaiah's story is told in 2 Kings 19:2-20:19. He is also mentioned in 2 Chron. 26:22; 2 Chron. 32:20, 32; Matthew 3:3; Matthew 8:17; Matthew 12:17-21; John 12:38-41; Romans 10:16, 20-21.

Trees and prophets share at least one important characteristic—both are planted for the future. Yet seedlings are often overlooked and prophets often ignored. Isaiah is one of the best examples of this.

The people of his time could have been rescued by his words. Instead, they refused to believe him. With the passing of centuries, however, Isaiah's words have cast a shadow on all of history.

Isaiah was active as a prophet during the reigns of five kings, but he did not set out to be a prophet. By the time King Uzziah died, Isaiah may have been established as a scribe in the royal palace in Jerusalem. It was a respectable career, but God had other plans for his servant. Isaiah's account of God's call leaves little doubt about what motivated the prophet for the next half century.

His vision of God was unforgettable.

The encounter with God permanently affected Isaiah's character. He reflected the God he represented. Isaiah's messages—some comforting, some confronting—are so distinct that some have guessed they came from different authors. Isaiah's testimony is that the messages came from the only One capable of being perfect in justice as well as in mercy—God himself.

When he called Isaiah as a prophet, God did not encourage him with predictions of great success.

God told Isaiah that the people would not listen. But he was to speak and write his messages anyway because eventually some *would* listen.

God compared his people to a tree that would have to be cut down so that a new tree could grow from the old stump (Isaiah 6:13).

Also called Esaiiah the son of Amos.

Son of Amos

Isaiah 1:1

These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah.

Isaiah was a prophet during the time when the original nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms—Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. The northern kingdom had sinned greatly against God, and the southern kingdom was headed in the same direction—perverting justice, oppressing the poor, turning from God to idols, and looking for military aid from pagan nations rather than from God.

Isaiah came primarily as a prophet to Judah, but his message was also for the northern kingdom. Sometimes “Israel” refers to both kingdoms. Isaiah lived to see the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C.; thus, his ministry began with warning the northern kingdom.

Prophecies in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah

Isaiah 6:1

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

The year that King Uzziah died was approximately 740 B.C. He remained leprous until he died because he tried to take over the high priest’s duties (2 Chron. 26:18-21). Although Uzziah was generally a good king with a long and prosperous reign, many of his people turned away from God.

Isaiah’s vision was his commission to be God’s messenger to his people. Isaiah was given a difficult mission. He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God that instead God was going to destroy them because of their disobedience.

Isaiah's lofty view of God in Isaiah 6:1-4 gives us a sense of God's greatness, mystery, and power. Isaiah's example of recognizing his sinfulness before God encourages us to confess our sin. His picture of forgiveness reminds us that we, too, are forgiven.

When we recognize how great our God is, how sinful we are, and the extent of God's forgiveness, we receive power to do his work. How does your concept of the greatness of God measure up to Isaiah's?

The throne, the attending seraphs or angels, and the threefold *holy* all stressed God's holiness. Seraphs were a type of angel whose name is derived from the word for "burn," perhaps indicating their purity as God's ministers. In a time when moral and spiritual decay had peaked, it was important for Isaiah to see God in his holiness. Holiness means morally perfect, pure, and set apart from all sin. We also need to discover God's holiness. Our daily frustrations, society's pressures, and our shortcomings reduce and narrow our view of God. We need the Bible's view of God as high and lifted up to empower us to deal with our problems and concerns. God's moral perfection, properly seen, will purify us from sin, cleanse our minds from our problems, and enable us to worship and to serve.

The heart of the people is moved and cannot prevail.

Isaiah 7:1-3

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;

The year was 734 B.C. Ahaz, king of Judah in Jerusalem, was about to be attacked by an alliance of the northern kingdom of Israel and Aram.

He was frightened by the possible end of his reign and by the invading armies who killed many people or took them as captives (2 Chron. 28:5-21). But, as Isaiah predicted, the kingdom of Judah did not come to an end at this time. The sign of Immanuel would be a sign of deliverance.

“The house of David” refers to Judah, the southern kingdom. “Ephraim,” the dominant tribe in the north, is a reference to Israel, the northern kingdom.

Shear-Jashub means “a remnant will return.” God told Isaiah to give his son this name as a reminder of his plan for mercy. From the beginning of God’s judgment he planned to restore a remnant of his people. Shear-Jashub was a reminder to the people of God’s faithfulness to them.

The “aqueduct of the Upper Pool” may have been the site of the Gihon spring, located east of Jerusalem. The Gihon spring was the main source of water for the holy city, and was also the spring that emptied into Hezekiah’s famous water tunnel (2 Chron. 32:30). The Washerwoman’s Field was a well-known place where clothing or newly woven cloth was laid in the sun to dry and whiten (see Isaiah 36:2)

The purpose of the Lord cannot be disannulled.

Isaiah 14:27

For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

This prophecy came true as Isaiah predicted (see 2 Kings 19; Isaiah 37:21-38).

Isaiah 20:1

In the year when King Sargon of Assyria captured the Philistine city of Ashdod,

Sargon II was king of Assyria from 722—705 B.C., and this event happened in 711 B.C. Isaiah graphically reminds Judah that they should not count on foreign alliances to protect them.

Fortified city of Judah were conquered.

Isaiah 36:1

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them.

Prophesied death of King Hezekiah

Isaiah 38:1

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

The events of Isaiah 38-39 happened before those of Isaiah 36-37.

When Isaiah went to Hezekiah, who was extremely ill, and told him of his impending death, Hezekiah immediately turned to God. God responded to his prayer, allowing Hezekiah to live another 15 years. In response to fervent prayer, God may change the course of our lives too. Never hesitate to ask God for radical changes if you will honor him with those changes.

According to 2 Chron. 32:24-26, Hezekiah had a problem with pride even after this double miracle of healing and deliverance. Eventually he and his subjects humbled themselves, so God's judgment was put off for several more generations.

Prophecy at the time of the invasion by Tartan, of Assyria

Isaiah 20:1

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Isaiah symbolically wears sackcloth, and walks barefoot as a sign to Israel

Isaiah 20:2-3

The Lord told Isaiah son of Amoz, "Take off all your clothes, including your sandals." Isaiah did as he was told and walked around naked and barefoot.

Then the Lord said, "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the last three years. This is a sign—a symbol of the terrible troubles I will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia.

God's command to Isaiah was to walk about naked for three years, a humiliating experience. God was using Isaiah to demonstrate the humiliation that Egypt and Cush would experience at the hands of Assyria. But the message was really for Judah: Don't put your trust in foreign governments, or you will experience this kind of shame and humiliation from your captors.

God asked Isaiah to do something that seemed shameful and illogical. At times, God may ask us to do things we don't understand. We must obey God in complete faith, for he will never ask us to do something wrong.

Comforts and encourages Hezekiah and the people during the siege of Jerusalem by Rab-shakeh

Isaiah 37:6-7

The prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'this is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers.

Listen! I myself will make sure that the king will receive a report from Assyria telling him that he is needed at home. Then I will make him want to return to his land, where I will have him killed with a sword.' "

Comforts Hezekiah in his affliction

2 Kings 20:1-11

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, O Lord, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight." Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the Lord:

"Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people.

Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord.

I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.' "

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil." They did this, and Hezekiah recovered!

Meanwhile, Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, "What sign will the Lord give to prove that he will heal me and that I will go to the Temple of the Lord three days from now?"

Isaiah replied, "This is the sign that the Lord will give you to prove he will do as he promised. Would you like the shadow on the sundial to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps?"

"The shadow always moves forward," Hezekiah replied. "Make it go backward instead." So Isaiah asked the Lord to do this, and he caused the shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!

Over a 100-year period of Judah's history (732-640 B.C.), Hezekiah was the only faithful king; but what a difference he made! Because of Hezekiah's faith and prayer, God healed him and saved his city from the Assyrians. You can make a difference too, even if your faith puts you in the minority. Faith and prayer, if they are sincere and directed toward the one true God, can change any situation.

The stairway of Ahaz was a sundial. Egyptian sundials in this period were sometimes made in the form of miniature staircases so that the shadows moved up and down the steps.

Reproves Hezekiah's folly in exhibiting his resources to the commissioners from Babylon

2 Kings 20:12-19

Soon after this, Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick. [13] Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything in his treasure-houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the aromatic oils.

He also took them to see his armory and showed them all his other treasures—everything! There was nothing in his palace or kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did those men want? Where were they from?"

Hezekiah replied, "They came from the distant land of Babylon."

"What did they see in your palace?" Isaiah asked.

"They saw everything," Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the Lord: The time is coming when everything you have—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord.

Some of your own descendants will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."

Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "This message you have given me from the Lord is good." But the king was thinking, "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime."

Is the chronicler of the times of Uzziah and Hezekiah.

2 Chron. 26:22

The rest of the events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

2 Chron. 32:32

The rest of the events of Hezekiah's reign and his acts of devotion are recorded in The Vision of the Prophet Isaiah Son of Amoz, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

PROPHECIES, REPROOFS, AND EXHORTATIONS OF ISAIAH

Foretells punishment of the Jews for idolatry, and reproves

Self-confidence and distrust of God

Isaiah 2:6-20

Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots:

Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man bowed down, and the great man humbled himself: therefore forgive them not.

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

The lesson of the song of the vineyard shows that God's chosen nation was to bear fruit—to carry out his work, to uphold justice. It did bear fruit, but the fruit was bad. This passage uses plays on words: the Hebrew words for *justice* and *bloodshed* sound very much alike, as do those for *righteousness* and *distress*. Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them"

In this section, God condemns six sins:

- (1) Exploiting others (Isaiah 5:8-10);
- (2) Drunkenness (Isaiah 5:11-12);
- (3) Taking sarcastic pride in sin (Isaiah 5:18-19);
- (4) Confusing moral standards (Isaiah 5:20);
- (5) Being conceited (Isaiah 5:21);
- (6) Perverting justice (Isaiah 5:22-24). Because of these sins, God punished Israel with destruction by Assyria (Isaiah 5:25-30).

A similar fate was awaiting Judah if they didn't turn from these sins.

These people spent many hours drinking and partying, but Isaiah predicted that eventually many would die of hunger and thirst. Ironically, our pleasures—if they do not have God's blessing—may destroy us. Leaving God out of our lives allows sin to come into them. God wants us to enjoy life (1 Tim. 6:17) but to avoid those activities that could lead us away from him.

The nation's heroes—the “men of rank”—would suffer the same humiliation as the common people. Why? Because they lived by their own values rather than God's. Many of today's media and sports heroes are idolized because of their ability to live as they please. Are your heroes those who defy God, or those who defy the world in order to serve God?

Some people drag their sins around with them. Some do so arrogantly, but for others, their sins have become a burden that wears them out. Are you dragging around a cartload of sins that you refuse to give up? Before you find yourself worn out and useless, turn to the One who promises to take away your burden of sin and replace it with a purpose for living that is a joy to fulfill (see Matthew 11:28-30).

When people do not carefully observe the distinction between good and evil, destruction soon follows. It is easy for people to say, “No one can decide for anyone else what is really right or wrong.” They may think getting drunk can't hurt them, extramarital sex isn't really wrong, or money doesn't control them. But when we make excuses for our actions, we break down the distinction between right and wrong. If we do not take God's Word, the Bible, as our standard, soon all moral choices will appear fuzzy. Without God, we are headed for a breakdown and much suffering.

Foretells the destruction of the Jews

Isaiah 3

This section describes what happens when a nation loses its leadership.

The people would be proud of their sins, parading them out in the open. But sin is self-destructive. In today's world, sinful living often appears glamorous, exciting, and clever. But sin is wrong regardless of how society perceives it, and, in the long run, sin will make us miserable and destroy us.

God tries to protect us by warning us about the harm we will cause ourselves by sinning. Those who are proud of their sins will receive the punishment from God they deserve. Having rejected God's path to life (see Psalm 1), the only alternative is the path to destruction.

In the middle of this gloomy message, God gives hope—eventually the righteous will receive God's reward and the wicked will receive their punishment. It is disheartening to see the wicked prosper while we struggle to obey God and follow his plan. Yet we keep holding on to God's truth and take heart! God will bring about justice in the end, and he will reward those who have been faithful.

Promises to the remnant restoration of divine favour

Isaiah 4:2-6

But in the future, Israel—the branch of the Lord—will be lush and beautiful, and the fruit of the land will be the pride of its people.

All those whose names are written down, who have survived the destruction of Jerusalem, will be a holy people. The Lord will wash the moral filth from the women of Jerusalem. He will cleanse Jerusalem of its bloodstains by a spirit of judgment that burns like fire.

Then the Lord will provide shade for Jerusalem and all who assemble there. There will be a canopy of smoke and cloud throughout the day and clouds of fire at night, covering the glorious land. It will be a shelter from daytime heat and a hiding place from storms and rain.

Those protected will be set apart to God when Messiah rules the earth (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zech. 6:12-13). Their distinctive mark will be their holiness, not wealth or prestige. This holiness comes from a sincere desire to obey God and from wholehearted devotion to him. Evil will not always continue as it does now. The time will come when God will put an end to all evil, and his faithful followers will share in his glorious reign.

**Delineates the ingratitude of the Jews in the parable of the vineyard,
And reproves it**

Isaiah 5:1-10

Now I will sing a song for the one I love about his vineyard:

My beloved has a vineyard
On a rich and fertile hill.
He plowed the land, cleared its stones,
And planted it with choice vines.
In the middle he built a watchtower
And carved a winepress in the nearby rocks.
Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes,
But the grapes that grew were wild and sour.
"Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah,
You have heard the case; you be the judges.

What more could I have done
To cultivate a rich harvest?
Why did my vineyard give me wild grapes
When I expected sweet ones?

Now this is what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will tear down its fences
And let it be destroyed.
I will break down its walls
And let the animals trample it.

I will make it a wild place.
I will not prune the vines or hoe the ground.
I will let it be overgrown with briars and thorns.
I will command the clouds
To drop no more rain on it."

This is the story of the Lord's people.
They are the vineyard of the Lord Almighty.
Israel and Judah are his pleasant garden.
He expected them to yield a crop of justice,

But instead he found bloodshed.

He expected to find righteousness,

But instead he heard cries of oppression.

Destruction is certain for you who buy up property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the land.

But the Lord Almighty has sealed your awful fate. With my own ears I heard him say, "Many beautiful homes will stand deserted, the owners dead or gone. Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine. Ten measures of seed will yield only one measure of grain."

Foretells the failure of the plot of the Israelites and Syrians against Judah

Isaiah 7:1-16

The year was 734 B.C. Ahaz, king of Judah in Jerusalem, was about to be attacked by an alliance of the northern kingdom of Israel and Aram. He was frightened by the possible end of his reign and by the invading armies who killed many people or took them as captives (2 Chron. 28:5-21). But, as Isaiah predicted, the kingdom of Judah did not come to an end at this time. The sign of Immanuel would be a sign of deliverance.

“The house of David” refers to Judah, the southern kingdom. “Ephraim,” the dominant tribe in the north, is a reference to Israel, the northern kingdom.

Isaiah predicted the breakup of Israel’s alliance with Aram (Isaiah 7:4-9). Because of this alliance, Israel would be destroyed; Assyria would be the instrument God would use to destroy them (Isaiah 7:8-25) and to punish Judah. But God would not let Assyria destroy Judah (Isaiah 8:1-15). They would be spared because God’s gracious plans cannot be thwarted.

Denounces calamities against Israel and Judah

Isaiah 7:16-25

Flies and bees are symbols of God's judgment (see Exodus 23:28). Egypt and Assyria did not at this time devastate Judah. Hezekiah followed Ahaz as king, and he honored God; therefore God held back his hand of judgment. Two more evil kings reigned before Josiah, of whom it was said that no other king turned so completely to the Lord (2 Kings 23:25). However, Judah's doom had been sealed by the extreme evil of Josiah's father, Amon. During Josiah's reign,

Egypt marched against the Assyrians. Josiah then declared war on Egypt, though God told him not to. After Josiah was killed (2 Chron. 35:20-27), only weak kings reigned in Judah. The Egyptians carried off Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, after three months. The next king, Jehoiakim, was taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. Egypt and Assyria had dealt death blows to Judah.

Hiring Assyria to save them would be Judah's downfall (2 Kings 16:7-8). To "shave" Judah's hair was symbolic of total humiliation. Numbers 6:9 explains that after being defiled, a person who had been set apart for the Lord had to shave his head as part of the cleansing process. Shaving bodily hair was an embarrassment—an exposure of nakedness. For a Hebrew man, having his beard shaved was humiliating (2 Samuel 10:4-5).

Judah's rich farmland would be trampled until it became pastureland fit only for grazing. No longer would it be a place of agricultural abundance, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), but a land with only curds, briars, and thorns.

The one who came to deliver was Jesus.

Isaiah 9:2-6

This child who would become their deliverer is the Messiah, Jesus. Matthew quotes these verses in describing Christ's ministry (Matthew 4:15-16). The territories of Zebulun and Naphtali represent the northern kingdom as a whole. These were also the territories where Jesus grew up and often ministered; this is why they would see "a great light."

The apostle John also referred to Jesus as the “light” (John 1:9). Jesus referred to himself as “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

In a time of great darkness, God promised to send a light who would shine on everyone living in the shadow of death. He is both “Wonderful Counselor” and “Mighty God.” This message of hope was fulfilled in the birth of Christ and the establishment of his eternal kingdom. He came to deliver all people from their slavery to sin.

Isaiah foretells prosperity under Hezekiah, and the manifestation of the Messiah

Isaiah 9:1-7

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will soon be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow.

Israel will again be great, and its people will rejoice as people rejoice at harvest time. They will shout with joy like warriors dividing the plunder.

For God will break the chains that bind his people and the whip that scourges them, just as he did when he destroyed the army of Midian with Gideon's little band. In that day of peace, battle gear will no longer be issued. Never again will uniforms be bloodstained by war. All such equipment will be burned.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the Lord Almighty will guarantee this!

Denounces vengeance upon the enemies of Israel

Isaiah 9:8-12

The Lord has spoken out against that braggart Israel, and the people of Israel and Samaria will soon discover it. In their pride and arrogance they say, "Our land lies in ruins now, but we will rebuild it better than before. We will replace the broken bricks with cut stone, the fallen sycamore trees with cedars."

The Lord will reply to their bragging by bringing Rezin's enemies, the Assyrians, against them— along with Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west. With bared fangs, they will devour Israel. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

Pride made Israel think it would recover and rebuild in its own strength. Even though God made Israel a nation and gave them the land they occupied, the people put their trust in themselves rather than in him. Too often we take pride in our accomplishments, forgetting that it is God who has given us our every resource and ability. We may even become proud of our unique status as Christians. God is not pleased with *any* pride or trust in ourselves because it cuts off our contact with him.

Denounces the wickedness of Israel, and foretells the judgments of God

Isaiah 9:18-21

This wickedness is like a brushfire. It burns not only briars and thorns but the forests, too. Its burning sends up vast clouds of smoke. The land is blackened by the fury of the Lord Almighty. The people are fuel for the fire, and no one spares anyone else. [20] They fight against their own neighbors to steal food, but they will still be hungry. In the end they will even eat their own children. Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, Ephraim will feed on Manasseh, and both will devour Judah. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

Ephraim and Manasseh were tribes in the northern kingdom descended from Joseph's two sons. They fought a civil war because of their selfishness and wickedness (see Judges 12:4).

Denounces judgments against false prophets

Isaiah 10:1-4

Destruction is certain for the unjust judges, for those who issue unfair laws. [2] They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children! What will you do when I send desolation upon you from a distant land? To whom will you turn for help? Where will your treasures be safe?

I will not help you. You will stumble along as prisoners or lie among the dead. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

God will judge crooked judges and those who make unjust laws. Those who oppress others will be oppressed themselves. It is not enough to live in a land founded on justice; each individual must deal justly with the poor and the powerless. Don't pass your responsibility off to your nation or even your church. You are accountable to God for what you do.

Foretells the destruction of Sennacherib's armies

Isaiah 10:5-34

Although Assyria did not know it was part of God's plan, God used this nation to judge his people. God accomplishes his plans in history despite people or nations who reject him. He did not merely set the world in motion and let it go! Because our all-powerful, sovereign God is still in control today, we have security even in a rapidly changing world.

Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, and Damascus were cities conquered by Assyria. Assured of great victories that would enlarge the empire, the king of Assyria gave an arrogant speech. Already Assyria had conquered several cities and

thought Judah would be defeated along with the others. Little did they know that they were under the mightier hand of God.

Samaria and Jerusalem were filled with idols that were powerless against the Assyrian military machine. Only the God of the universe could and would overthrow Assyria, but not until he had used the Assyrians for his purposes.

The predicted punishment of the Assyrians soon took place. In 701 B.C., 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were slain by the angel of the Lord (Isaiah 37:36-37). Later, the Assyrian empire fell to Babylon, never to rise again as a world power.

The Assyrians were haughty. They thought they had accomplished everything in their own power. Our perspective can become distorted by our accomplishments if we fail to recognize God working his purposes through us. When we think we are strong enough for anything, we are bound to fail because pride has blinded us to the reality that God is ultimately in control.

No instrument or tool accomplishes its purposes without a greater power. The Assyrians were a tool in God's hands, but they failed to recognize it. When a tool boasts of greater power than the one who uses it, it is in danger of being discarded. We are useful only to the extent that we allow God to use us.

Assyria's downfall came in 612 B.C. when Nineveh, the capital city, was destroyed. Assyria had been God's instrument of judgment against Israel, but it too would be judged for its wickedness. No one escapes God's judgment against sin, not even the most powerful of nations (Psalm 2).

Once Assyria's army was destroyed, a small group of God's people would stop relying on Assyria and start trusting God. This remnant would be but a fraction of Israel's former population: see Ezra 2:64-65 for the small number who returned to Judah (see also Isaiah 11:10-16).

Those who remained faithful to God despite the horrors of the invasion are called the remnant. The key to being a part of the remnant was *faith*. Being a descendant of Abraham, living in the Promised Land, having trusted God at one time—none of these were good enough. Are you relying on your Christian heritage, the rituals of worship, or past experience to put you in a right relationship with God? The key to being set apart by God is faith in him.

The restoration of Israel and the triumph of the Messiah's kingdom

Isaiah 11

Assyria would be like a tree cut down at the height of its power (Isaiah 10:33-34), never to rise again. Judah (the royal line of David) would be like a tree chopped down to a stump. But from that stump a new shoot would grow—the Messiah. He would be greater than the original tree and would bear much fruit. The Messiah is the fulfillment of God's promise that a descendant of David would rule forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

God will judge with righteousness and justice. How we long for fair treatment from others, but do we give it? We hate those who base their judgments on appearance, false evidence, or hearsay, but are we quick to judge others using those standards? Only Christ can be the perfectly fair judge. Only as he governs our hearts can we learn to be as fair in our treatment of others as we expect others to be toward us.

Judah had become corrupt and was surrounded by hostile, foreign powers. The nation desperately needed a revival of righteousness, justice, and faithfulness. They needed to turn from selfishness and show justice to the poor and the oppressed. The righteousness that God values is more than refraining from sin. It is actively turning toward others and offering them the help they need.

A golden age is yet to come, a time of peace when children could play with formerly dangerous animals. Not all of this was fulfilled at Christ's first coming. For example, nature has not returned to its intended balance and harmony (see Romans 8:9-22). Such perfect tranquility is possible only when Christ reigns over the earth.

When will this remnant of God's people be returned to their land? Old Testament prophecy is often applied both to the near future and the distant future. Judah would soon be exiled to Babylon, and a remnant would return to Jerusalem in 537 B.C. at Cyrus's decree. In the ages to come, however, God's people would be dispersed throughout the world. These cities represent the four corners of the known world—Hamath in the north, Egypt in the south, Assyria and Babylonia in the east, the islands of the sea in the west. Ultimately God's people will be regathered when Christ comes to reign over the earth.

Isaiah is talking about a new or second exodus when God will bring his scattered people back to Judah and the Messiah will come to rule the world. The Lord dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk through it on their way to the Promised Land (Exodus 14). He dried up the Jordan River so the nation could cross into the land (Joshua 3). God will again provide the way of return for his people.

The burden of Babylon

Isaiah 13

Isaiah 13 is an oracle or message from God concerning Babylon. Long before Babylon became a world power and threatened Judah, Isaiah spoke of its destruction. Babylon was the rallying point of rebellion against God after the flood (Genesis 11). Rev. 17-18 use Babylon as a symbol of God's enemies.

At the time of this oracle, Babylon was still part of the Assyrian empire. Isaiah communicated a message of challenge and hope to God's people, telling them not to rely on other nations but to rely on God alone. And he let them know that their greatest enemies would receive from God the punishment they deserve.

Isaiah 14:1-28

A prominent theme in Isaiah is that aliens (non-Israelites) would join the returning Israelites (Isaiah 56:6-7; Isaiah 60:10; Isaiah 61:5). God's intention was that through his faithful people all the world would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Through the family of David, the whole world could be saved by Christ. We must not limit God's love to our own people. God loves the whole world.

Denunciation against the Philistines

Isaiah 14:9-32

Isaiah received this message from the Lord in 715 B.C., the year that King Ahaz of Judah died. "The rod that struck you" (Isaiah 14:29) was not Ahaz but Shalmaneser V or Sargon of Assyria. The "cloud of smoke" from the north (Isaiah 14:31) refers to the soldiers of Sargon of Assyria.

Burden of Moab

Isaiah 15

Moab was east of the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with his older daughter (Genesis 19:31-38). Moab had always been Israel's enemy. They oppressed Israel and invaded their land (Judges 3:12-14), fought against Saul (1 Samuel 14:47) and against David (2 Samuel 8:2, 11-12). Moab would be punished for treating Israel harshly.

Isaiah 16

Attacked by the Assyrians, Moabite refugees would flee to Sela, which lay in the country of Edom to the south. Desperate Moabites would send a tribute of lambs to Jerusalem asking for Judah's protection. Jerusalem would be a safe refuge for a while. Isaiah advised Judah to accept these refugees as a sign of compassion during the enemy's time of devastation.

Burden of Damascus

Isaiah 17

The northern kingdom and Aram made an alliance to fight against Assyria. But Tiglath-Pileser III captured Damascus, the capital of Aram, in 732 B.C. and annexed the northern kingdom to the Assyrian empire. Ahaz, king of Judah, paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 16:1-14).

An obscure prophecy, supposed by some authorities to be directed against the Assyrians, by others against the Egyptians, and by others against the Ethiopians

Isaiah 18

The northern kingdom and Aram made an alliance to fight against Assyria. But Tiglath-Pileser III captured Damascus, the capital of Aram, in 732 B.C. and annexed the northern kingdom to the Assyrian empire. Ahaz, king of Judah, paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 16:1-14).

The burden of Egypt

Isaiah 19

Egypt, the nation where God's people were enslaved for 400 years (Exodus 1), was hated by the people of Israel. Yet Judah was considering an alliance with Egypt against Assyria (2 Kings 18:17ff). But Isaiah warned against this alliance because God would destroy Assyria in his time.

Isaiah 20

Sargon II was king of Assyria from 722—705 B.C., and this event happened in 711 B.C. Isaiah graphically reminds Judah that they should not count on foreign alliances to protect them.

Denunciations against Babylon

Isaiah 21:1-10

Lookouts (watchmen on the city walls) often appear in prophetic visions of destruction. They are the first to see trouble coming. The prophet Habakkuk was a watchman (Habakkuk 2:1). The vision of the riders could represent the Medes and Persians attacking Babylon in 539 B.C.

Prophecy concerning Seir

Isaiah 21:11-12

Dumah, or Edom, had been a constant enemy of God's people. They rejoiced when Israel fell to the Assyrians, and this sealed Edom's doom (Isaiah 34:8ff; Isaiah 63:4). Seir was another name for Edom because the hill country of Seir was

given to Esau and his descendants (see Joshua 24:4). Obadiah foretells, in great detail, the destruction of Edom.

Arabia

Isaiah 21:13-17

The places listed here are all in Arabia. They are border cities that controlled the trade routes through the land. This is Isaiah's prediction of disaster.

Concerning the conquest of Jerusalem, the captivity of Shebna, and the promotion of Eliakim

Isaiah 22:1-22

Isaiah had warned his people, but they did not repent; thus they would experience God's judgment. Because of his care for them, Isaiah was hurt by their punishment and mourned deeply for them. Sometimes people we care for ignore our attempts to help, so they suffer the very grief we wanted to spare them. At times like that we grieve because of our concern. God expects us to be involved with others, and this may sometimes require us to suffer with them.

Elam and Kir were under Assyrian rule. The entire Assyrian army, including its vassals, joined in the attack against Jerusalem.

The leaders did what they could to prepare for war: they got weapons, inspected the walls, and stored up water in a reservoir. But all their work was pointless because they never asked God for help. Too often we take steps that, though good in themselves, really won't give us the help we need. We must get the weapons and inspect the walls, but God must guide the work.

The people said, "Let us eat and drink," because they had given up hope. Attacked on every side (Isaiah 22:7), they should have repented (Isaiah 22:12), but they chose to feast instead. The root problem was that Judah did not trust God's power or his promises (see Isaiah 56:12; 1 Cor. 15:32). When you face difficulties, turn to God. Today we still see people giving up hope. There are two common responses to hopelessness: despair and self-indulgence.

But this life is not all there is, so we are not to act as if we had no hope. Our proper response should be to trust God and his promise to include us in the perfect and just new world that he will create.

The overthrow of Tyre

Isaiah 23

Why would Egypt be “in anguish” when Tyre fell? Egypt depended on Tyre’s shipping expertise to promote and carry their products around the world. Egypt would lose an important trading partner with the fall of Tyre.

God would destroy Tyre because he hated its people’s pride. Pride separates people from God, and he will not tolerate it. We must examine our lives and remember that all true accomplishment comes from our Creator. We have no reason for pride in ourselves.

The judgments upon the land, but that a remnant of the Jews would be saved

Isaiah 25

Isaiah exalted and praised God because he realized that God completes his plans as promised. God also fulfills his promises to you. Think of the prayers he has answered, and praise him for his goodness and faithfulness.

Isaiah 26

These four chapters (24-27) are often called “Isaiah’s Apocalypse.” They discuss God’s judgment on the entire world for its sin. Isaiah’s prophecies were first directed to Judah, then to Israel, then to the surrounding nations, and finally to the whole world. These chapters describe the last days when God will judge the whole world. At that time he will finally and permanently remove evil.

Isaiah 28:1-5

Ephraim represents the northern kingdom of Israel, ruled by a line of evil kings. When Israel split into two kingdoms after Solomon’s reign, Jerusalem ended up in the southern kingdom. Leaders in the northern kingdom, wishing to stay entirely separate from their relatives to the south, set up idols to keep the people from

going to the temple in Jerusalem to worship (see 1 Kings 12). Thus the people in the northern kingdom were led into idolatry. Isaiah gave this message to Israel to warn them, as well as to Judah to encourage them to repent before being punished as the northern kingdom would be only a few years later.

Declares the glory of God upon the remnant who are saved

Isaiah 28:5-6

Then at last the Lord Almighty will himself be Israel's crowning glory. He will be the pride and joy of the remnant of his people. He will give a longing for justice to their judges. He will give great courage to their warriors who stand at the gates.

Foretells calamities to Judah

Isaiah 59:9-12

Sin offends our holy God and separates us from him. Because God is holy, he cannot ignore, excuse, or tolerate sin as though it didn't matter. Sin cuts people off from him, forming a wall to isolate God from the people he loves. No wonder this long list of wretched sins makes God angry and forces him to look the other way.

People who die with their life of sin unforgiven separate themselves eternally from God. God wants them to live with him forever, but he cannot take them into his holy presence unless their sin is removed. Have you confessed your sin to God, allowing him to remove it? The Lord can save you if you turn to him.

Life Application

We who are part of that future can see that many of the promises God gave through Isaiah have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We also gain the hope of knowing that God is active in all of history, including our own.

Strengths and accomplishments:

Considered the greatest Old Testament prophet

Quoted at least 50 times in the New Testament

Had powerful messages of both judgment and hope

Lessons from his life:

God's help is needed in order to effectively confront sin while comforting people

One result of experiencing forgiveness is the desire to share that forgiveness with others

God is purely and perfectly holy, just, and loving

Key verse:

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, here am I. Send me! ” (Isaiah 6:8).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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