

# ISAIAH

## INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – In 1:1, the book claims to be the visions of Isaiah, son of Amoz. Some scholars believe that since Isaiah names Cyrus as the king of the exile, that there were at least two writers, one early in 750-680 BC who wrote chapters 1-39, and one late in 640-610 BC who wrote chapters 40-66.
2. DATE WRITTEN – Again in 1:1, it claims to have been written during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah putting it 750-680 BC.
3. READERS – The book is addressed to the people of Judah warning them that if they are wicked like Israel, they too will be taken captive like Israel.
4. THEME – The book promises the judgment of God on Judah but offers comfort for the time of exile by the promises of the coming Messiah.
5. KEY VERSES – 6:11-13, 40:1-5, 53:1-12

## OUTLINE

1. ISAIAH PROPHESED GOD'S JUDGMENT ON JUDAH. CH 1-35
  - A. God will punish Judah and Jerusalem for their sins. CH 1-12
  - B. God will judge the nations surrounding Judah. CH 13-23
  - C. Sermons against Judah's sins, and universal sin. CH 24-35
2. THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HEZEKIAH'S REIGN. CH 36-39
  - A. Hezekiah's success in turning to God in battle. Ch36-37
  - B. Hezekiah's success in turning to God in sickness. Ch38
  - C. Hezekiah's failure in ignoring God in foreign affairs. Ch39
3. ISAIAH PROPHESED GOD'S COMFORT FOR JUDAH WHILE THEY WERE IN EXILE. CH 40-66  
When Israel refused to repent, Isaiah realized that God's time of judgment would come in the form of exile. God gave him a message of hope that God would bring them through.
  - A. Comfort is available through the only true God. Ch40-48
  - B. The Messiah, God's Servant will come to suffer but also to deliver. Ch49-57
  - C. Judah's Remnant will still have a glorious future. Ch58-66

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ISAIAH

1. The book of Isaiah is quoted at least 65 times in the New Testament.
2. The Gospel of the "Substitutionary Atonement" is taught very clearly in Isaiah 53. This means that Christ died as a substitute in our place. V5-6 "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."
3. Isaiah reveals God's sovereignty over the future with very specific prophecies hundreds, even thousands of years into the future as with the specific prophecy regarding the exile under Cyrus. See 44:28, 45:1, and 45:13.
4. Isaiah contains some of the greatest, best-loved and best-known passages in the Bible. Isaiah's call in Chapter 6; Messiah's birth in Ch 7 & 9; God's comfort in Ch 40; The Suffering Servant in Ch 53; and the glory of the new earth in Ch 65.
5. God rules the whole earth and judges not only His people but also all people of the earth. See Chapters 13-23. This is very important information for a biblical philosophy of missions.
6. While much has been written about the identity of the author, there is insufficient evidence to discount the probability that one author, Isaiah, wrote the book around 700 B.C. The book testifies to the reliability of God's Word.

## ISAIAH

1 – God called on his people to turn back to him. They have gone contrary to what seems to be strong instinct nature and rejected God, their creator. At the same time, God announced that he would restore them. V24 “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.” The warning is clear. The people have been rebelling against the Lord and he promised to punish them. At the same time he offered to forgive in V18. “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” The offer is their choice. V19-20 “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” The choice was theirs. The choice is ours.

2 – The Lord promised that one day he would make all things right. V2 “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills.” V5 “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” This will involve the humbling of humans. There is a chorus that is found in V11, 17-18. “The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.” The chapter is about the lowering of humans and other gods and the exalting of the Lord alone. In contrast is V9 that says, “So man is humbled, and each one is brought low – do not forgive them!”

3 – This chapter continues the announcement of the Lord’s judgment. At the same time it appears that he is not pleased with the effects of the judgment and will take vengeance on the ones who carried out the judgment he sent. V10-11 “Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him.” V8 is illustrative. “For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence.”

4 – This very short chapter has to do with the continuing announcement of judgment on the people. Simultaneously it appears that it includes a promise of protection through a “canopy” for the righteous. V5-6 “Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.” Does this not sound similar to what God did for Israel when he brought them out of the land of Egypt?

5 – Isaiah tells a parable about a vineyard. The vineyard represents the people of Israel. God has done all he can do but they still only produce “wild grapes.” Therefore God will stop tending the vineyard and allow it to be overrun. The people have been wicked and disobedient for so long that God will judge them and send them into exile. What an indictment is V12 that leads to V13. “They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord, or see the work of his hands. Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.” V16 “But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.” The problem in V24 is identified as, “For they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”

6 – This is the account of the call of Isaiah to the work of the prophet. First, V1-5 God broke him with the contrast between the holiness of God and his own sinfulness. Think about what happens in Scripture when people have a real encounter with the living God. When do we ever have that reaction? Then, V6-7 comes the healing from his sin that separated him and disqualified him from ministry. “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’” Then, V8-13 God called him and gave him a very unpleasant message of ruin and destruction. What a daunting task, yet he had no choice but to do it, given his vision and experience. The point of the message is that the Word of God will produce either softening or hardening of hearts, just as

the sun does to ice and clay. When the word of God is preached, it separates those God is calling from those he is not. Help us to be faithful to your Word.

7 – It seems hard to follow the arguments in these chapters. When the foreign nation invaded the land of the Lord's people, God announced he would deliver his people. The king in his wickedness refused to believe and would not even accept a sign. The Lord gave one anyway. V14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Note the greatness of God in that he whistles for nations and they come to do his bidding (V18), even though it must be admitted that they do not know they are obeying God. They think they have free will and are only doing what they want.

8 – God desires his message to be large and clear and plain. As people, we do not want to hear or accept his message. So we turn to other sources for advice. V19-20 "And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,' should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to the word, it is because they have no dawn." Our response should resonate with V13. "But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

9 – The title says that it is about the Lord's judgment of Israel. The Lord strengthens the enemy against his people for judgment. The repeating chorus is V12, 17, 21 and 10:6. "For all this, his anger has not turned away, and his hand is still stretched out." This means that because the people's wickedness is so great that even after God has judged to what seems like a great extent, it is not enough to satisfy his righteous wrath. This makes the sacrifice of Jesus, which does fulfill his wrath, all the more impressive. This chapter also contains one of the greatest prophecies about the coming Messiah in V6-7. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

10 – The Lord called and enabled the Assyrians to be his instrument against his people in judgment. However, they thought that it was their own call and power and overdid what God desired. So God will also judge and punish them. A remnant of Israel will survive. The emphasis in this chapter seems to be on the remnant. V20-21 "In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God."

11 – Into the scenario of punishment, the Lord will send his deliverer. This deliverer will rescue the remnant of his people. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and the fear of the Lord will characterize his reign. It will be a reign of justice. V9 "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." He will also overcome Israel's enemies that surround her. What is striking is that this will be a second time that God will gather the remnant. Does this refer to the gathering after the exile? It may to some extent but so much of the rest of the promises are not fulfilled by that so that it seems there is more still expected in a literal reign of Christ (Messiah) over the earth. This is what we believe in the Evangelical Free Churches that Jesus will literally return and reign over the earth.

12 – This chapter records the response of his people of praise. V2 "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation." V6 "Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

13 – Chapters 13-14 are prophecies against Babylon. As exalted as it was in history, God promised a complete and total destruction in his judgment. He does this as a way to have compassion on Jacob/Israel. God will arrange for Babylon's complete destruction so that it is only a wasteland. V19 "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and

Gomorrah." The description of the anger of God is very strong. V5 "They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the Lord and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land." V13 "Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger." It is especially interesting to read this in the light of the 2003 war against Iraq that is the current location of Babylon and the rumor that Saddam Hussein was attempting to rebuild Babylon and establish it as the ruler of the world once again.

14 – He went on with prophecies against the Philistines, Assyria and Moab. This is a chapter of great hope for the nation of Israel. God promised that they would be restored but that the nations who have oppressed them would be destroyed. V22-23 "I will rise up against them, declares the Lord of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity, says the Lord. And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord of hosts." Verses 12-16 are often thought to be a description of the pride and fall of Satan. They may also refer to one of the rulers of Babylon who aspired to greatness but the language seems to be mixed. It is probably about both. The king of Babylon repeated the thoughts that Satan had before his fall. Note that in the moment of his peak of glory, he is totally in the hands of God who throws him down and casts him out of heaven into "Sheol."

15 – The destruction of surrounding nations continues with Moab. V3 "In the streets they wear sackcloth; on the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears." This again shows that God is sovereign over all nations. This was a nation that had persecuted and fought against his people and he took vengeance on them.

16 – This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter on the destruction of Moab. It will be complete. V12 "And when Moab presents himself, when he wears himself on the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail." V5 promises that God will rule. "Then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness." God says that in three years the life and rule of Moab will be over.

17 – Much of this section has to do with the nations who would be judged by God because of their evil treatment of his people. How comforting that is for us! God will protect us, not necessarily from the insults and persecutions but he will judge those who do them against us just as he did Moab, Assyria and Egypt. This chapter contains a prophecy announcing the destruction in judgment of Damascus, capital of Syria. V10-11 "For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge; therefore, though you plant pleasant plants and sow the vine-branch of a stranger, though you make them grow on the day that you plant them, and make them blossom in the morning that you sow, yet the harvest will flee away in a day of grief and incurable pain."

18 – This chapter, while announcing judgment, also announces restoration to the same people so that they can worship the one true God. V3 "All you inhabitants of the world, you who dwell on the earth..." V7 "At that time tribute will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the Lord of hosts."

19 – There is quite a remarkable prophecy about Egypt in those Isaiah prophecies that both Egypt and Assyria will turn to the Lord and become part of a third who seek God and rule on his behalf. Egypt will be judged but also restored to worship the Lord. These are remarkable passages until you remember that this was God's intention from Genesis 1. V19 "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border." V21-22 "And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the Lord and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them." V24-25 "In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth,

whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.'

20 – This very short chapter speaks of judgment and the certainty of it. God announced it through a living example of Isaiah who walked around for three years "naked and barefoot." V6 "And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?'"

21 – In this chapter a lookout is observed several times. The point is to announce that God's judgment has taken place. V9 "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground." The factor of proof in any situation is the phrase illustrated in V17, "for the Lord, the God of Israel has spoken." That settles it.

22 – The Lord announced the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, called "the valley of vision." His main charge against them was that they made all the preparations for an invasion except calling on him. V11 "You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or see him who planned it long ago." All that the people count on will fail them in that day. They did not listen to and obey the command of God.

23 – Judgment will come on Tyre for seventy years. There is a remarkable section in 23:17-18. "At the end of seventy years, the LORD will visit Tyre, and she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth. Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the Lord. It will not be stored or hoarded but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell before the Lord." What does that say about our approach in evangelism toward those who are prostitutes or our thinking about their business? Is this saying that they are converted and work for the Lord or that even though they work for themselves, their profits go for God and his people?

24 – This chapter turns the announcement of the judgment of God to include the entire earth and all its peoples. V3 "The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered; for the Lord has spoken his word." They live and think and talk as if everything is good and they are faithful to God. The reality is they are about to be consumed. V18b "For the windows of heaven are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble." V21 "On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven, and the kings of earth, on the earth." At the same time there are expressions of great praise to God. Is this like "the Day of the Lord" in that those who belong to God celebrate the judgment of the wicked on the earth as a sign of the righteousness of God in triumph? V15 "Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the Lord, the God of Israel."

25 – This is a difficult chapter to understand. It appears that God announced that he would destroy the city of Jerusalem but that he would rescue his people. V7-8 "And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken." V9 "It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he may save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"

26 – V19 is quite intriguing. "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy. For your dew is like a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead." Is this a prophecy of resurrection? The chapter is mostly about the righteousness of God. V9b-10 "For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the Lord." God takes a chance when he does not punish sin immediately that people will think that they can get away with it. It is really part of his common grace that he gives to all people. The purpose is that they will take the opportunity and turn to him in repentance and ask for his forgiveness.

27 – The chapter begins with the judgment of God. V1 “In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” It ends with restoration and joy. V13 “And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt, will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.”

28 – It is hard to follow what is happening in these chapters. There is clearly to be judgment on Ephraim. Yet God will show himself glorious. V5-6 “In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.” It ends with this testimony of the Lord. V29 “This also comes from the Lord of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.” It appears again that it is the word of the Lord that is the key. Since he promised judgment and since he is just and righteous, he must judge the wickedness of the nations. V13 “And the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” The chapter includes the prophecy about Jesus in V16-17. “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste. And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line.”

29 – “Ariel” is another name for Jerusalem, “the city where David encamped.” These chapters are filled with prophecies of both judgment and destruction and restoration and hope. V19 “The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.” Here is quite a statement that seems to also be a prophecy fit for today. V8 “As when a hungry man dreams he is eating and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.” We will not find anything that satisfies until we find our satisfaction in God alone. God has created a “God-sized” hole and vacuum in each person that only he can fill. No one who opposes God or fights “against Mount Zion,” another name for Jerusalem, will be satisfied. Note that again the punishment in one sense is a lack of the word of the Lord. Can there be anything worse than not hearing from God, especially once you have heard from him? V10 “For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and closed your eyes (the prophets) and covered your heads (the seers).”

30 – The people rejected the message God sent them. Verses 9-11 say, “For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” Therefore they will be judged. But that is not God’s preference. He wants to be gracious to them. V18 “Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.” At the same time there are incredibly detailed prophecies about God’s judgment/revenge taken out on Assyria even as he heals his own people. V26 “Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.” See also the description of God preparing for battle on their behalf against the Assyrians in V31-33.

31 – Israel turned to Egypt for help but that is useless because it is human against spirit and flesh against God. V1 “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord.” V3 “The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.” V5 “Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will spare and rescue it.”

32 – This chapter again calls the people to return to the Lord and promises many blessings for them if they will. V1 “Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.” V17 “And the effect of righteousness will be peace; and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.” Any way other than God lacks righteousness and peace and trust.

33 – It is not clear if this is the prophet only who is crying out to God or if he is supposed to represent the cry of the nation of Israel crying out to God to deliver them. Either way it is a great prayer. V2 “O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.” There is a proper fear of the Lord that leads them to turn to him. V14-16 “The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.” This repentance and turn to the Lord leads to a different perspective on the Lord. V21-22 “But there the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go. For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us.”

34 – This chapter exalts God over all nations. Note the terms, “the nations,” “earth,” and “world.” God’s judgment leaves these nations desolate so that only animals dwell there. It will be a day of vengeance for the justice of the Lord. V8 “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.” All of this judgment fulfills the word of the Lord. V16 “Seek and read from the book of the Lord. Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the Lord has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them.” In the past the humans have ruled over the animals but now the judgment is so complete against the humans that the picture is of the animals dwelling in safety and security.

35 – There are many prophecies here of the restoration of God’s people to a place and time of prosperity. There would be great encouragement in these words given in the middle of all the announcements of judgment and destruction. V3-4 “Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong and fear not; Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.’” V10 “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”