

## ISAIAH - THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

Intro: Contrary to the common idea about a prophet, a prophet was primarily a preacher to the people of his own generation. Daniel did not qualify as a prophet because he was not a preacher.

Prophets were raised up in times of special need. Many have referred to them as God's emergency men.

There are two kinds of prophets in the OT: writing, and those who did not write. Isaiah is an example of the first; Elijah, of the latter. The non-writing prophets were more concerned about the moral conditions of the day; the writing prophets were also concerned about moral issues, but their additional emphasis had to do with prophecies of the Messiah.

We are not able to date all of the prophetic books of the OT (Joel and Obadiah in particular), but we do know that Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries (with Micah being the younger), and that Hosea and possibly Amos prophesied to the north in Israel at the same time.

### I. ISAIAH, THE MAN.

Isaiah was the son of Amoz (Isa. 1:1). He was married. He calls his wife "the prophetess" (Isa. 8:3). He had two sons: Shearjashub (which means a remnant shall return - Isa. 7:3) and Mahershalalhashbaz ("hasting to the spoil, hurrying to the prey" (8:2, 3), symbolic of Assyria's mad lust of conquest" - Robinson, p. 19).

He seems to have been born and raised in Jerusalem. His family was evidently prominent. He seems to have had unusually close connections with both the kings and the priests.

His call dates from the death of Uzziah (c. 740 B. C.). This is what we have in chapter 6. Evidently he does not record his call until he is that far in the book so that the reason for his call will be apparent. That is really the only vision of the book (contrary to the prophecy of Daniel). The nature of Isaiah's call became a point of emphasis throughout Isaiah's ministry (which lasted 40 or 40 years). We see this in his repeated references to "the Holy One of Israel" (12x in 1-39; 12x in 40-66).

Outside of the book of Isaiah we gain some information about him from 2 Kings 19, 20; 2 Chron. 26:22; 32:20, 32. He evidently wrote a life of Uzziah which has not been preserved. Prophecy during the reign of four kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah), the first and the last were definitely

the best and the greatest encouragement for Isaiah. But both were a disappointment to him at the last.

It is thought that Isaiah was "sawn asunder" (Heb. 11:37) according to Jewish tradition by King Manasseh.

No prophet was more involved with foreign nations than was Isaiah. Chapters 13 to 23 are devoted to them.

One writes about Isaiah in the following way:

"Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history" (by Valetton in Robinson, p. 22).

## II. ISAIAH'S BOOK.

The importance of Isaiah's prophecy is seen in the fact that it is referred to 412 times in the NT--in all of the books except 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and the 3 epistles of John.

It is the foundation of OT prophecy. If you were to study it in the original Hebrew, you would know over half of the vocabulary for the entire OT by the time you were finished. Its place among the prophets is like Romans among the epistles.

There are two major divisions in the prophecy, but 8 sub-

divisions: Chs. 1-39	Chs. 1-12
Chs. 40-66	Chs. 13-23
	Chs. 24-27
	Chs. 28-35
	Chs. 36-39
	Chs. 40-48
	Chs. 49-57
	Chs. 58-66

These latter divisions are good to keep in mind in reading the book.

Generally speaking,

- 1) the first part of the book deals with judgment interspersed with prophecies of redemption,
- 2) but the second part deals with redemption interspersed with warnings of judgment.

Isaiah's ministry was concluded c. 700 B. C. - or perhaps a few years later.

But the greatest glory of the prophecy of Isaiah is seen when we the subjects which Isaiah discusses. For a long book, they are not many in number because Isaiah keeps coming back to the same issues, repeating, enlarging, and emphasizing as he pours out his heart for Israel and for all nations. While he was a very devout and loyal son of Israel, his burden for men crossed national boundaries to include the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

HAD A  
MINISTRY  
TO BELIEV-  
ERS AND  
UNBELIEV-  
ERS TOO.  
TO ISRAEL  
AND TO  
THE GEN-  
TILES.

With perhaps one exception, the major themes of Isaiah's prophecy are found in the first division of the book: chs. 1-12. Note them carefully and be on the lookout for them through the book:

- 1) God's hatred of sin. See the opening verses of ch. 1. What better picture of depravity could you have than is given in vv. 5-8?
- 2) The grace of God (Isa. 1:9).
- 3) God's hatred of hypocrisy (Isa. 1:10 ff.).
- 4) A prophet of hope (Isa. 1:16 ff.). *Spiritual life.*
- 5) The day of the Lord (Isa. 2)--including judgment and salvation. In this we learn about "the remnant," and find that Isaiah leaves no doubt about the future blessing of Israel. This also includes hope for the nations (cf. Isa. 2:3, 4).
- 6) MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL: THE MESSIANIC PASSAGES. Cf.
  - a) Isa. 4:2. SALVATION - GOSPEL
  - b) Isa. 7:14. MORE THAN ANY OTHER
  - c) Isa. 9:6, 7. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET!
  - d) Isa. 11:1.
- 7) What is not found in the first section: "new heavens and a new earth." Cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22. Thus, the prophecy of Isaiah extends from 700 years B. C. into eternity!

Concl: Is the OT important for us today?

The answer:

- 1) Just after referring to Abraham in Rom. 4, Paul writes in v. 23 and v. 24,
 

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."
- 2) Just before quoting from many OT passages in Rom. 15, Paul writes in v. 4,
 

"For whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."

One of the passages he quotes is Isa. 11.
- 3) In 1 Cor. 10:11, after briefly reviewing the wilderness experiences of the children of Israel, Paul writes:

"Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

4) 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 has its application, too.

Therefore, we need Isaiah's message today. There are many parallels between his day and ours. The answer is still the same: THE MESSIAH, CHRIST!

John brings together the two parts of Isaiah's prophecy in John 12:37-41, and, in a sense, touches upon the themes.

"But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Isaiah, the prophet, might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spoke of him."