

Isaiah, "because he saw his glory"

Lesson 3 – Isaiah, the Book

I. THE NAME "ISAIAH."

In Hebrew *yasha`yahu*, and *yasha`yah*; Greek *Esaias*; Latin *Esaias* and *Isaias*. His name was symbolic of his message. Like "Joshua," it means "Yahweh saves," or "Yahweh is salvation," or "salvation of Yahweh." - (ISBE)

II. Time of Prophecy.

He resided and ministered in Jerusalem from c. **740 B.C.**, in "the year of King Uzziah's death," until c. **700 B.C.** or somewhat later. He thus prophesied during the kingships of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (**1:1**). (*New Unger's Bible Dictionary*). After all the evidence is analyzed, there is no convincing reason to question the traditional view that the entire book was written by the prophet whose name it bears. The most likely time for its writing was about **700 B.C.** or shortly thereafter. (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).

III. Structure of the Book.

With its **66 chapters**, **Isaiah** is the longest prophetic book of the Old Testament. Most scholars agree that the book falls naturally into two major sections, **chapters 1-39** and **chapters 40-66**. One good way to remember the grand design of the book is to think of the sections as a parallel to the two main parts of the Bible. The first section of **Isaiah** contains the same number of chapters as the number of books in the Old Testament (**39**). The second part of the book parallels the New Testament in the same way—**27 chapters** for the 27 books of this section of the Bible.

The general theme of the first part of **Isaiah's** book is **God's approaching judgment on the nation of Judah**. In some of the most striking passages in all the Bible, the prophet announces that God will punish His people because of their sin, rebellion, and worship of false gods. But this message of stern judgment is also mixed with beautiful poems of comfort and promise. Although judgment is surely coming, better days for God's Covenant People lie just ahead. This section of **Isaiah's** book refers several times to the coming **MESSIAH**. His name will be called **IMMANUEL (7:14)**. As a ruler on the throne of David, he will establish an everlasting kingdom (**9:7**).

The second major section of **Isaiah's** book (**ch. 40-66**) is filled with prophecies of comfort for the nation of Judah. Just as **Isaiah** warned of God's approaching judgment in the first part of his book, the **27 concluding chapters** were written to comfort God's people in the midst of their suffering after His judgment had fallen. The theme of this entire section may be illustrated with **Isaiah's** famous hymn of comfort that God directed the prophet to address to the people: "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (**40:1-2**).

Isaiah's message in this part of his book is that after their period of judgment has passed, God's Covenant People will be restored to their place of responsibility in God's plan for the salvation of the world. The great suffering through which they were passing was their period of captivity as exiles of the pagan nation of Babylon. This theme of suffering on the part of God's people is demonstrated dramatically by Isaiah's famous description of the **Suffering Servant**. The nation of Israel was God's suffering servant who would serve as God's instrument of blessing for the rest of the world after their release from captivity and restoration as His Chosen People (**42:1-9**).

But Isaiah's prophecy also points beyond the immediate future **to the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah** several centuries later. The heart of this stunning prophecy occurs in **ch. 53**, as Isaiah develops the description of God's Servant to its highest point. The Servant's suffering and death and the redemptive nature of His mission are clearly foretold. Although mankind deserved God's judgment because "we have turned, every one, to his own way" (**53:6**), God sent His Servant to take away our sins. According to Isaiah, it is through His suffering that we are made right with God, since "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (**53:6**).

Isaiah closes his book with a beautiful description of the glorious age to come (**ch. 60-66**). In that day the city of Zion or Jerusalem, will be restored. God's people will gather there to worship Him in all His majesty and glory. Peace and justice will reign, and God will make all things new. (*Nelson*).

IV. POLITICAL CONDITIONS.

A. EGYPT IN THE AGE OF ISAIAH.

"During this time Judah had become the battleground of the two great powers of the ancient world, Assyria and Egypt ... Like the iron upon the anvil, therefore, Judah lay between two hostile forces, one of which (Assyria) was burning with the youthful fires of enterprise and lust of conquest, while the other (Egypt) still remembered its former glories and the empire it had wielded in Asia." – Sayce, *The Times of Isaiah*, p. 21.

"An end was put to this condition of things (i.e., division in Egypt in the middle of the eighth century) by the Ethiopian king Shabaka, or

Sabako. He is the So of the Old Testament (2 Kings 17:4), whom Hoshea had bribed to help him against the Assyrian monarch." – *Ibid.* p.22.

Upon the death of Sabako's successor, who reigned only for a short time, Tirhakah (Taharka), Sabako's brother-in-law began to reign. Because Egypt feared the growing power of Assyria, from that time they began to entere meddle in politics in Palestine.

Tirhakah sought to form a league against Assyria in Palestine, with Jerusalem as its head. In this he was successful (Time of Hezekiah, see **Isa. 30**). A battle between Sennacherib and Tirhakah ensued; then the loss of the 185,000 Assyrians against Jerusalem. Both claimed the victory, but Sennacherib went home. Tirhakah was too weak to follow up Assyria's loss.

B. **ASSYRIA** IN THE AGE OF ISAIAH.

Tiglath-pileser (Pul of the Bible), a military adventurer seized the throne of Assyria in 745. He was a man of great ability and force of character. "He excelled as a commander; he equally excelled as an administrator and civil organizer. Under him the Assyrian army became once more the scourge of the surrounding nations; nothing could resist it." He began building the Assyrian empire by combining military conquest, placing the conquered under one civil law, and requiring recognition of one god, Assur. – Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

KINGS OF ASSYRIA:

1. Tiglath-pileser, 745-727.
2. Shalmaneser, 727-722.
3. Sargon, 722-705. Murdered.
4. Sennacherib, 705-681, Murdered by his sons.
5. Esar-haddon, a third son, 681-668. According the Sayce, "As a military commander he was in no wise inferior to his grandfather Sargon; as a civil administrator he proved himself the best of the Assyrian kings." – *op. cit.*, p. 65.

C. **JUDAH** IN THE AGE OF ISAIAH.

1. The Egyptian Party. Because of fear of the rising Assyrian empire, and because it was believed that Egypt was equally powerful, the Egyptian party was numerous in Jerusalem. "They urged the necessity of looking to Egypt for support, and of resisting the attack of the Assyrians with Egyptian help." – Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 81, 82.
2. The Assyrian Party. "Opposed to the Egyptian was the Assyrian party, which advocated submission to the all-powerful empire of Assyria." *Ibid.*, p. 84.
3. The Nationalistic Party. "A third party, which we may call National, was headed by Isaiah. Its policy was a policy of non-intervention, that was opposed to an alliance with Assyria or Egypt." Judah's safety lay with God. – p. 84, 85.

CONTEMPORARY **KINGS OF JUDAH.**

1. Uzziah 787-735. Good king, Long successful reign.
2. Jotham 749-734. Good, mostly co-regent with Uzziah.
3. Ahaz 741-726. Very wicked.
4. Hezekiah 726-697. Good.
5. Manasseh 697-642. Very wicked.