

Isaiah (1)

Listed Scriptures

Isaiah 6, 9, 12

Lesson Aim

- 1) To examine God's holiness, love and sovereignty in the Book of Isaiah.
- 2) Students will be reminded to thank God for His greatness, the wonders of His creation and His love in their lives.

Memory Verse

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:6)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isa 6, 9, 12

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



One exciting archaeological find, the Dead Sea scrolls, gives us insight into how accurately the prophet's words have been preserved. The Qumran community hid their sacred library some 180 years before Christ. The library was discovered in 1947. Apparently Isaiah (along with Deuteronomy and Psalms) was especially loved by these Old Testament believers. Among the findings was a copy of Isaiah, the first copy of any Old Testament book from the pre-Christian era. Before this time our earliest text of the Hebrew Bible dated from around 1100 A.D. The striking fact is that the text of the scroll authenticates the Hebrew text of our Bible; except for minor differences in vocalization, spelling and the presence or absence of an article ("the," "that"), this ancient text is the same as the text of some 1,300 years later! God has preserved across the centuries an accurate text of His word so that we can read our Old Testament with the confidence that what we see on its pages is a translation of the very words the authors penned.



The Seven Wonders

(Before reading the following story to your students, ask them to write down what they believe are the Seven Wonders of the World. Share student responses.)

There was a college professor who asked his students to make a list of what they thought were the current Seven Wonders of the World. The winners were:

- Egypt's pyramids
- The Taj Mahal
- The Grand Canyon
- The Panama Canal
- The Empire State Building
- St. Peter's Basilica
- China's Great Wall

While he was gathering the votes, the professor noted that one student hadn't finished writing. She seemed to be deep in thought, so he asked her if she was having trouble.

"Yes," she replied, "A little. I can't quite make up my mind because there are so many."

The professor said, "Well, why don't you read to us what you have so far, and maybe we can help."

The girl nodded, cleared her throat, and began reading her list of the world's Seven Wonders.

- The ability to touch
- The ability to taste
- The ability to see
- The ability to hear
- The ability to feel
- The ability to laugh
- The ability to love

The classroom grew quiet as everyone thought about the truth they'd just heard. This young lady understood what truly were the wonders of life.

Today we will study about the wonder of God through the eyes of the prophet Isaiah.



Part 1

General Overview



A. Author


The author of this book is Isaiah, son of Amoz (1:1). It is believed that Isaiah descended from the royal line of Judah. According to Jewish tradition, Amoz was the brother of King Uzziah's father, Amaziah, which meant that King Uzziah and Isaiah were cousins. Isaiah's wife was a prophetess (Is 8:3). He had two sons; one was called She'arjash'ub, meaning, "a remnant shall return", and the other Ma'hershal'al-hash'baz, which means "a spoil speeds, the prey hastes" (Is 7:3; 8:3). Isaiah had an active ministry for 60 years before he was executed. Jewish tradition has it that during the reign of the evil king Manasseh, Isaiah was sawed in two.

In recent times, however, the authorship of the Book of Isaiah has been a source of controversy. Some scholars attribute chapters 1-39 to the prophet Isaiah himself, but attribute chapters 40-55 (called "Deutero-Isaiah") to an unknown prophet in Babylon and chapters 56-66 (called "Trito-Isaiah") to another unknown prophet in Palestine. Conservatives, however, have argued persuasively that Isaiah wrote the entire book.




B. Date and Place of Work

Isaiah's long ministry ranged from 745-695 B.C. He began his ministry the year that King Uzziah died and continued through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh of Judah. His work also coincided with the reigns of King Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hosea of Israel. Contemporaries of Isaiah were the prophets Micah in Judah, and Hosea and Amos in Israel.



C. Historical Background

Despite the agricultural, commercial and military successes in both the northern and southern kingdoms, the kings, priests and people departed from God and indulged in sin. Immorality, excessive drinking, idolatry, oppression of the poor, greed, and false prophets prevailed (Is 1:10-17; 5:7, 8, 11, 12, 23). With the prosperity and stability of the nation, the people became proud. They imitated foreign influences and worshiped their gods. Isaiah rose to revolutionize the social and religious decline.




D. Theme and Characteristics

The Book of Isaiah is the first book of the major prophets. It is often been called “the Prince of Prophets,” “the gospel book of the Old Testament,” “the Book of Romans of the Old Testament” and “the miniature Bible.”

- a. The Book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters. The entire Bible consists of 66 books.
- b. The Bible is divided into the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament consists of 39 books and the New Testament consists of 27 books. The book of Isaiah is divided into two parts. The first section consists of 39 chapters and the second section consists of 27 chapters.
- c. The Old Testament centers on the divine justice of God. The first part of Isaiah (chapters 1-39) also conveys God’s message of justice and judgment upon the sinful nation, culminating with a promise of redemption.
- d. The entire Bible concerns the salvation of God and the establishment of the kingdom of God. The overall theme of this book is found in Isaiah’s name, which means, “Salvation is of the Lord.” The word “salvation” appears twenty-six times in Isaiah but only seven times in all the other prophetic books combined. Throughout this book, Isaiah unfolds God’s promise of future blessings through the Messiah.
- e. The first Book of the Old Testament discusses how sin came into the world and God’s redemptive plan. The first chapter of the Book of Isaiah discusses the sins of the Israelites and the promise of redemption and restoration.
- f. The last chapters of the Book of Revelation speak of the new heaven and new

earth. The final chapters of Isaiah also speak of the new heaven and new earth.



E. Teachings from the Book of Isaiah

a. The Holy God of Israel

The two parts of the book of Isaiah exhibit two important aspects of God’s divine nature. The 39 chapters in the first half of Isaiah reflect God’s holiness, righteousness and justice. The second half of Isaiah, from chapters 40-66 dwells on the other side of God’s divine nature, His love and compassion. How does God manifest His holiness in the Book of Isaiah?

1. Through visions of God’s glory

The theme of holiness permeates the entire book of Isaiah. The title, “The Holy One of Israel” is used as many as 25 times (1:4; 6:1; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:1, 12, 15; 37:23) to remind the Israelites of God’s holy and divine nature. In chapter 6, Isaiah sees a vision of God sitting on the throne; His train filled the temple and His glory and authority filled the entire earth. Above Him stood the seraphim saying repeatedly, “Holy, holy, holy.” At a time when moral and spiritual laxity had reached its peak, God used the vision to remind the prophet of His greatness, power and holiness. By seeing God in all His glory, Isaiah saw his own sins and that of the Israelites more clearly. Oftentimes when we compare ourselves with others we feel pretty good about ourselves. But the moment we kneel before God and witness His glory and holiness, our imperfections become very blatant. Daniel (Dan 10:15-17), Job (Job 42:5-6) and John (Rev 1:17) experienced this too. Upon seeing the holiness of God, we need to humble ourselves and repent of our sins.

2. Through judgment

Since God is holy, He desires His chosen ones to be holy (Lev 11:44, 45). The word holy comes from the Hebrew word, qodesh, or hagiosune in Greek, both meaning “separation” or “setting apart.” Unfortunately, the Israelites failed to separate themselves from ungodly people and evil ways. In the first five chapters of Isaiah, God charges Israel of many sins:

- * Social injustice and evil prevailed (Is 28; 29).
- * The people committed spiritual adultery by turning from a covenant with God to actively and lustfully seeking out foreign idols (Is 57:1-13).
- * Their faith was superficial (Is 1:10-15; 29:13; 58:1-14). Although the people made sacrifices and kept the feasts, their hearts were far from God and their lives were dedicated to ungodliness.

* They did not put their trust in God; they sought allegiance with other nations for protection (Is 31).

* They profaned the Sabbath (Is 56:1-8).

These sins violated the very core of God's divine nature. God's holiness, justice and righteousness could not ignore, excuse or tolerate such sins. God will not permit the people called by His Name to tarnish His glory, or their filth to taint His Name and He will vindicate His holiness. Through punishment God calls His people to repent and reflect His image in their lives.

3. Through refinement and purification

In Isaiah 1:25, God promised to refine His people as metal in a smelting pot. The process of refinement involves melting the metal and skimming off the impure slag until the silversmith can see his own image in the liquid metal. In the same manner, God will purge Judah of her impurities so that once again she can be known as the City of Righteousness. Throughout the history of the Israelites, God used various ways to urge His people to depart from evil (Is 2:1-5; 4:1-6). Famine, plagues and disasters, and enemy oppression were some of the methods, yet, despite these efforts, the people remained stubborn. As a last resort, God sent them into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. God's purpose was not to bring evil upon them, but to discipline and cleanse them from their wicked and rebellious ways (Jer 29:11). Today, God may use trials of fire to cleanse us (Num 31:23; Mal 3:2). Hebrews 12:5-6 reminds us "not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when we are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

b. The Compassionate God

The second half of the Book of Isaiah sees a dramatic shift. After the pronouncement of judgment and stern warnings from chapters 1–39, God now tenderly comforts and consoles Jerusalem. Let us examine how God's love is manifested towards His people.

1. Restored the Israelites to their homeland

Even though God's patience was exhausted and He would later abandon the Israelites by allowing them to be taken into captivity, God showed His people in advance how He would preserve a remnant and restore them. A hundred years prior to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the captivity, God told Isaiah to name one of his sons Shear-jashub, which

means, "a remnant will return" as a reminder of God's mercy and salvation (Is 7:3; 14:1-2; 49:8). After the 70 years had passed, God gathered the dispersed from the four corners of the earth to Jerusalem where they restored the holy temple (Is 10:21; 11:11-12). Even in judgment God is merciful and compassionate. His faithfulness towards His covenant with Abraham and David endures despite the unfaithfulness of the Israelites (Gen 22:17-18; 2 Sam 7:8-9; Jer 33:19-19-26; Jer 31:36-37). Although in a brief moment of anger the Lord had forsaken Israel, His love and covenants are everlasting (Is 54:7-8; 49:14-16). "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed."

2. A highway for the returned exiles

One of the practices of ancient kings of the East was to send messengers to prepare the way prior to their travels. The messenger leveled out and straightened the highways to ensure a smooth and pleasant journey for the king. In Isaiah 35:8-10, the prophet prophesied how the God of Israel would prepare a way for His chosen people to return home from captivity (Is 11:16; 35:8-10; 62:10). Just as the Lord dried up the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk through, and as He paved a way through the River Jordan, God will once more open a way for the redeemed to return home. He will remove all obstacles; neither bandits nor wild beasts will be found there. God prepared the way through King Cyrus of Persia who allowed the remnants to return to their homeland in 539 B.C.

But God's love does not stop here. Since the beginning of time, God has prepared a highway for mankind so that through this new and living way all those who believe in Him can be saved (Heb 10:20). In the New Testament, John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. He came proclaiming, "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth" (Is 40:3-4). John the Baptist came to remove the obstacles (described as valleys, mountains, crooked places and rough places) within men's hearts by calling them to repentance so that they could be ready to receive the salvation of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth and the life," and those who come to Him can receive life everlasting.



Part 2

The Sovereignty of God



A. The Lord of All

The prophet Isaiah conveys how the destiny of individuals, kings and rulers, nations and events are under the absolute authority and dominion of God.

a. God controls the destiny of individuals

1. The Lord chose and called Isaiah to be His spokesperson. God alone decides whom He will use to fulfill His mission (Is 6:8).
2. God designated King Cyrus of Persia to be the one to liberate the captives and allow them to return to the land of Israel. Two hundred years before Cyrus was born, God chose him for this special task (Is 45:1; 44:28). Cyrus was granted military prowess and success for the sake of His chosen people (Is 45:4). Although Cyrus was a gentile, he was called God's "anointed" because he was commissioned to fulfill God's purpose (2 Chron 36:22-23).
3. God added 15 more years to King Hezekiah's life (Is 38). Only God can change the course of our lives. Our very breath are in His hands (Is 38:1-8; 16; 45:7; 1 Sam 2:6-7).

b. God controls the nations to fulfill His purpose

God uses foreign nations to carry out His will. Although Assyria and Babylon were gentile nations who did not know or worship God, they were used as God's instruments of discipline.

1. God used the Assyrians as the rod of His anger and the staff of His indignation (Is 5:26-30; 10:5-6). During his reign, King Ahaz relied on the military strength of the Assyrians rather than on God. His trust on idol-worshipping countries was considered an act of rebellion in God's eyes and these very people became the tool that God used to purge the people of their ignorance and wickedness (Is 5:26; 10:5-19).
2. God used the Babylonians as an instrument of punishment. Although King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was a gentile king, God called him "My servant." Nebuchadnezzar was sent by God to come up against the land, against its inhabitants, and against the surrounding nations to utterly

destroy them (Jer 25:9; Hab 1:6). Even though King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, attempted to escape, he and the nation could not flee from the iron yoke that God had destined to be placed around their necks.

c. God's will cannot be shaken

In the year 734 B.C. an alliance of the northern kingdom (Israel) and Syria came up against Ahaz, king of Judah (Is 7:1-9; 2 Kgs 16:5-9). Ahaz was so frightened that "his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind." God sent the prophet Isaiah to console Ahaz and told him that their plan would not succeed because it was against God's will. And as Isaiah predicted, the kingdom of Judah did not come to an end at that time. God's will is supreme over all in authority, over nations, all historical events and all hostile forces. Knowing that He is in control of every aspect of life, does He not deserve our full faith and trust?



B. The Omniscient God

God's wisdom and understanding is unsearchable. The book of Isaiah contains many prophecies which were fulfilled exactly as predicted.

a. Prophecies fulfilled in Isaiah's lifetime:

- Judah's deliverance (7:4-7, 16)
- Destruction of Syria and Israel (8:4; 17:1-14)
- Assyria's invasion of Judah (8:7-8)
- Philistines subjugated (14:28-43)
- Moab plundered (15 & 16)
- Egypt and Ethiopia conquered by Assyria (20:4)
- Arabia pillaged (21:13-17)
- Tyre subdued (23:1-12)
- Jerusalem delivered from Assyria (36)
- Hezekiah's life extended 15 years (38:5)

b. Prophecies fulfilled after Isaiah's lifetime:

- Babylonian captivity (39:5-7)
- Babylon overthrown by Cyrus (46:11)
- The Medes and Elamites (13:17; 21:2; 48:14)
- Babylon's perpetual desolation (13:20-22)
- Cyrus called by name (44:28; 45:1,4)
- Cyrus' conquest of the world (41:2-3)
- Cyrus' liberation of the captives (45:13)

Cyrus' rebuilding of Jerusalem (44:28; 45:13)
 Israel restored (27:12-13; 48:20; 51:14)
 Israel's religion to permeate Egypt and Assyria (19:18-25)
 Israel's religion to spread over the whole world (27:2-6)
 Tyre's captivity and restoration (23:13-18)
 Edom's perpetual desolation (34:5-17)

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



- 1 What are the two main themes of the Book of Isaiah?
- 2 How does God manifest His holiness and love in the Book of Isaiah?

Teaching Tips

For this lesson, you may wish to consider using the following materials:

1. Map of Israel and surrounding nations (to be posted up throughout the course of the twelve lessons)
2. TV and video player
3. Nature video / pictures of God's creation or changing landscapes

For each lesson, have students fill out the worksheet for each prophet (found in Student Workbook, see sample below). Have students briefly record the following:

- a. Original meaning of the prophet's name
- b. Time and place of his activities
- c. The economic, social and political scenes during his days
(E.g. Was the country in economic prosperity? What was the name of the king in power? Was the country at war? Etc.)
- d. If possible, determine whether the prophet worked during the pre-exilic, exilic or post-exilic era of Jewish history.
- e. Identify the key messages of the prophet. What is the key theme? Was the prophet proclaiming a message of judgment or hope? Was he posing the question of righteous suffering as in the Book of Habakkuk?

Name of prophet	
Meaning of prophet's name	
When and where the prophet worked	
Who the prophet was speaking to	
What was happening historically	
Some of the key messages	

LIFE APPLICATION

How Great Thou Art!



Have you praised God today? As we go about our busy lives, we often fail to see clearly the things going on around us. In the same way, we often fail to see all that God has given and done for us. Have you gone through times when you did not give thanks at all? What did you find happening? And when you did thank Him, how did you feel then? If you praise and love Him, you will have a greater love for God, for others and also for yourself.

Let us celebrate God's majesty by singing the following hymns:

1. Majesty
2. How Great Thou Art (314)
3. He's Everything to Me (500)
4. Thank You Lord (393)
5. Joyful, Joyful (7)

Say to your Students:

Next we will watch a video called _____ (teacher's choice). As you view it, take time to think once again about the unfathomable greatness of God and His wonderful redeeming love for us. (show video of God's creation. If you are unable to have access to one, use pictures/photos of landscapes or animals.)

Saints of old have written down their reflections as they meditate on the power and almightiness of God. Read the following Bible passages to see what they thought:

1. Job 26:1-14; Job 38
2. Psalm 135:6-7
3. Isaiah 40:12-17, 21-31

What things can we give thanks and praise to the Lord for? Write a psalm to the Lord for all His marvelous doings.

Suggested Reading and Videotapes:

1. Pao, Senhor, Max Lucado, p19. Stories for a Faithful Heart compiled by Alice Gray
2. Awesome Faces of God's Creation, Moody Publications, CBD Stock Number: WW670569
3. The Wonder of Creation: Ireland, CBD Stock Number: WW42344, \$11.99
4. The Wonder of Creation: Scotland, CBD Stock Number: WW42336, \$11.99
5. Eyewitness Series: Ocean Video, CBD Stock Number: WW42147X, \$10.00 (For more selections, log on to cbd.com)

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



"O Lord, my God, how excellent is Your name in all the earth. The Pleiades and Orion sing your praise. Sparrows and chickadees mimic their song. All creation sing in harmony. And most wonderful of all, Lord, thank you, for saving my soul."

Lesson 3

Isaiah (2)

Listed Scriptures

Isaiah 40-41, 53, 55, 65-66

Lesson Aim

- 1) Students will learn that the Lord Jesus fulfilled each of the Old Testament prophecies.
- 2) Students will learn that because of Christ's advent, our lives are filled with hope, joy and peace.

Memory Verse

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." (Is 61:1)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isa 40-41, 53, 55, 65-66

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Please see Bible Background section in Lesson 2.