

## ISAIAH

The nation of Israel has no past, no present, no future apart from the Lord. It was the Lord Who called Abram out of Ur. The Lord Who promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord Who took Israel down to Egypt and brought them out with a display of His power. The Lord Who formed them into a nation and gave them prophets, judges and kings. Despite the foreign invaders, He has maintained them with their unique identity. They are the only ancient nation surviving intact, and their future salvation is secured by God's covenant grace. In addition, they are the only nation on earth about which God gives specific details concerning its future.

Very basically, that is a summary of the contents of the prophecy of Isaiah. The book has sixty-six chapters, - the first thirty-nine can be said to concentrate mainly on judgment, and the remaining twenty-seven focus primarily upon Israel's hope.

Isaiah's name (*Yasha`yah*) comes from the same Hebrew root as Joshua, Elisha, and Jesus, "The Lord is salvation". He is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet. For example, Paul quotes from his prophecy or alludes to it over eighty times in his epistles.

Isaiah belonged to an influential family, - the son of Amoz, - for he had access to the king (7:3, [Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz](#)). He prophesied from around 739-686 BC ... during the reigns of four kings of Judah (1:1), - Uzziah (Amaziah, in II Kings), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His style of writing was more superior than any of the other prophets, for example he used a range of 2,186 different words, whereas Ezekiel used 1,535, and Jeremiah used 1,653, and 2,170 in the whole of the Psalms.

He was married and had two sons, whose names were indicative of God's plan for Israel, - "Shearjashub" ("a remnant shall return," 7:3) and "Mahershalalhashbaz" ("hasting to the spoil, speedy to the prey," 8:3). Tradition records he died during the reign of King Manasseh (c. 695-642 BC ... the only son of Hezekiah and Hephzibah) by being cut in half with a wooden saw (cf. [Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder](#)). Since he recorded the account of Sennacherib's death (chs. 37-38), he lived until at least 681 BC.

During the reign of the first king in which Isaiah prophesied, - King Uzziah's fifty-two years reign, - Judah had prospered and developed into a strong

commercial and military state. At the same time, though, it declined spiritually. To make matters worse, King Uzziah made the mistake of assuming the privileges of a priest when he burnt incense on the altar in the temple (**II Kings 15:2** Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jeholiah of Jerusalem. **3** And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; **4** Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places. **5** And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. ... **II Chron. 26:16** But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. **17** And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: **18** And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. **19** Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. **20** And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him).

On his son Jotham's accession to the throne, the nation of Assyria was on the rise, under King Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC). Also, Judah, - consisting of the two southern tribes, - had to contend increasingly with the ten northern tribes of Israel *plus* Syria (**II Kings 15:37**). Also, spiritual corruption continued to plague Judah.

During Jotham's son Ahaz's reign (c. 735-715 BC), Israel and Syria formed an alliance to combat the rising threat of Assyria, but Ahaz refused to join the alliance with Israel and Syria (**II Kings 16:5**; **Is. 7:6**). As a consequence, Israel and Syria began a war with Judah (734 BC), with the intention of dethroning Ahaz. ... Judah was 'out on a limb' with no friends.

Ahaz panicked, and requested help from the Assyrian King, Tiglath-Pileser III, who gladly responded by ransacking Gaza, and carrying off into captivity the population of Galilee, Gilead, and Damascus (732 BC). This meant, however, Ahab was beholding to Assyria, and this led to Assyria introducing their heathen idolatrous altar into Solomon's temple (**II Kings 16:10** And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the

pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof. **11** And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus. **12** And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon. **13** And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar. **14** And he brought also the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar. **15** And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by. **16** Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded). Assyria also captured Samaria (721 BC).

Following Ahaz, King Hezekiah began his reign in 715 BC. For him, bringing the people back to God became the priority (**II Kings 18:4** He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan [*literally, 'a thing of brass'*] ... **II Chron. 30:1** And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

On the international scene, - to avoid an Assyrian invasion, - Judah had to pay a heavy tribute. In 701 BC Hezekiah became very ill with a life-threatening disease, but he prayed and the Lord extended his life by fifteen years, until 686 BC (**II Kings 20; Is. 38**). At this point the conniving up-and-coming Babylonian empire used the occasion of his health's improvement to send him congratulations and wish him well ... They were interested in forming an alliance with Judah.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of Assyria being troubled with inward strife, Hezekiah stopped paying them tribute. So, in 701 BC the new Assyrian King, - Sennacherib, - embarked on an invasion spree. He invaded the coastal regions of Israel, as he marched his way down south to Egypt. As he passed through Judah he conquered and ransacked many towns and villages and carried their inhabitants off to Assyria. He also besieged Jerusalem (**II Kings 18:17-19:8; Is. 36:2-37:8**). It did not work out for him though for Hezekiah, - on Isaiah's advice, - refused to surrender ... and the Lord defended His people, **Is. 37:35** For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my

servant David's sake. <sup>36</sup> Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. <sup>37</sup> So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. <sup>38</sup> And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

So, that is the history ... It was an extremely volatile period and you can read how Isaiah briefly prophesied against the surrounding nations in chapters 13:1 - 23:18. Most of his prophecies, though, related to God's people. Sadly, Judah was fraternising with idolatry, and the nations were vying among themselves for supremacy. Nevertheless, - even in their disobedience, - God was watching over His people, and He used Isaiah as a prophet primarily in relation to the southern Kingdom of Judah.

In the present, - during Isaiah's lifetime, - the people of Judah were increasingly emptying their religion of Jehovah. They were replacing Him with formal and ritualistic worship ... which was an imitation of idolatry, <sup>1:10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. <sup>11</sup> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. <sup>12</sup> When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? <sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. <sup>14</sup> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. <sup>15</sup> And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Consequently, Isaiah prophesied to King Hezekiah that in the near-future catastrophe would strike, <sup>39:6</sup> Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

... The past, the present, the near-future ... and then over six hundred years further into the future, Isaiah prophesied the birth of Jesus to a virgin (Is. 7:14) ... that He would come from Galilee (9:1,2) ... He would grow up before His people as a tender plant, <sup>11:1</sup> ... a rod out of the stem of Jesse ... He prophesied how Jesus would become the Sacrifice for Israel (Is. 53) ... These prophecies were fulfilled literally.

... The past, the present, the near future, over six hundred years into the future ... These prophecies were all fulfilled *literally*, - not symbolically or spiritually or allegorically, - but *literally* fulfilled. Isaiah proved his credentials as a prophet ... However, He also spoke of *more* prophecies ... prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled. ... And, - for God's Word to be consistent ... for the pattern to continue, - surely the remaining prophecies will also be fulfilled as the previous prophecies were ... *literally*. God is not going to change the pattern ... He'll continue as He has been doing ... illustrating His purpose through the future of the nation of Israel.

Whereas Jeremiah was known as 'the weeping prophet', Isaiah is sometimes known as 'the evangelical prophet' because he was the bearer of good news to his people ... Jerome (c. 342–420), one of the 'Church Fathers', wrote about him, "He was more of an Evangelist than a Prophet, because he described all of the Mysteries of the Church of Christ so vividly that you would assume he was not prophesying about the future, but rather was composing a history of past events". ... An example of how he shows God's love and commitment to Israel is recorded in Is. 49:15, Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. **16** Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. That is the same as Jeremiah had prophesied, **33:25** Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; **26** Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them. ... Isaiah continued, **40:1** Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. **2** Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned ... **41:10** Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. ... **43:1** But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. **2** When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. **3** For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour

He prophesied how, - in the future, - a King, - like none other, - would rule over them, **9:7** Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with

judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. First of all, the King at His coming will 'bind the strong man' (cf. Mk. 3:27), and the principalities and powers who associate with Him, **Is. 24:21** And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. **22** And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison [*cf. ... Rev. 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled*] ... And then secondly, during that time when they are shut up, the King will reign from Jerusalem, and Israel will come to acknowledge Him as the Messiah, and they will be saved, **47:24** Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. **25** In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. ...

He will have returned them to their own land, **49:8** Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; **9** That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. **10** They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. **11** And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. **12** Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

This will be a time when **11:2** the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; **3** And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: **4** But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. **5** And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. **6** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. **7** And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **8** And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. **9** They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. This will be God's Kingdom on earth, during which His Son will rule and keep order. **10** And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and

his rest shall be glorious. ... This is repeated in 49:6, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. <sup>7</sup> Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee

And the centre of the world will be the city from where the King reigns supreme, Jerusalem, <sup>2:2</sup> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. <sup>3</sup> And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ... **Is. 62:1** For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. <sup>2</sup> And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. <sup>3</sup> Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

All this is how Isaiah was encouraging his people. He has proved his credentials as a faithful and truthful prophet of the Lord ... in that many of his prophecies had been already fulfilled. Therefore, those that had not been fulfilled were awaiting fulfilment. They point ahead to a time when Israel would again be in their own land, surrounded by their enemies, and in danger of annihilation. But when the darkest clouds would be hanging over them, the King would appear in His glory and establish His reign on earth.

And in conclusion, Isaiah gives us the eternal scene, - following the end of Christ's reign on earth ... Remember what had been prophesied in Is. 24, <sup>22</sup> And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, *and after many days shall they be visited.* ... And what is going to happen *after the many days*? There will be cataclysmic disasters sent upon this world, leading to its destruction, <sup>23</sup> Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. ... That picture is elaborated upon in the final chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, <sup>66:15</sup> For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his

rebuke with flames of fire. **16** For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead [*shaphat, exercise judgment and punishment*] with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. [*cf. II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*] **17** They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. **18** For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory ... **22** For as the new heavens and the new earth, *which I will make*, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. ... He is going to *make/create* a new heaven and a new earth because this first heaven and this first earth, - this present world in which we live, - will be no longer (Rev. 21:1). ... And God's people will live forever in His glorious presence.

... And that was God's message to the people of Israel through His servant Isaiah. Throughout the prophecy God has not given any credence to rejecting Israel or replacing them, for He has indelibly written the name of His beloved upon the palms of His hands. He is bound by His own Word to fulfil the promises and covenant He has made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ... and which one day He will perfectly bring to pass.

In the good pleasure of God, - as Isaiah indicates with his regular mention of the light being shone upon the Gentiles ... and as Paul also elaborates in Rom. 9-11, - through the continual rebellious unbelief of the nation of Israel, Gentiles will be saved ... And so also will *all* Israel be saved (Rom. 11:26) for, **Rom. 11:28** *as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

This means that the Redeemed chosen by God's free and sovereign grace, from out of the Gentile nations, have been privileged to be 'grafted in' to the olive tree during the period of Israel's unbelief ... the Jew and Gentile being made one in Jesus Christ, **Eph. 2:12** *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

What a prophecy Isaiah presents! Warren Wiersbe described Isaiah as "a man who had God's light, and he was not afraid to let it shine". The Light Isaiah shone is the Light we also shall continue to shine, even though we are living in dark days, for our Light cannot be extinguished (Jn. 1:5). It will, - as Isaiah



prophesied, - be replaced though for in the new heaven and the new earth ...  
**Is. 60:19** The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Amen.

## **Outline of the Book of Isaiah**

### **I. Judgment (1:1–35:10)**

- A. Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)
  - 1. Judah's social sins (1:1–6:13)
  - 2. Judah's political entanglements (7:1–12:6)
- B. Oracles of Judgment and Salvation (13:1–23:18)
  - 1. Babylon and Assyria (13:1–14:27)
  - 2. Philistia (14:28–32)
  - 3. Moab (15:1–16:14)
  - 4. Syria and Israel (17:1–14)
  - 5. Ethiopia (18:1–7)
  - 6. Egypt (19:1–20:6)
  - 7. Babylon continued (21:1–10)
  - 8. Edom (21:11, 12)
  - 9. Arabia (21:13–17)
  - 10. Jerusalem (22:1–25)
  - 11. Tyre (23:1–18)
- C. Redemption of Israel through World Judgment (24:1–27:13)
  - 1. God's devastation of the earth (24:1–23)
  - 2. First song of thanksgiving for redemption (25:1–12)
  - 3. Second song of thanksgiving for redemption (26:1–19)
  - 4. Israel's chastisements and final prosperity (26:20–27:13)
- D. Warnings against Alliance with Egypt (28:1–35:10)
  - 1. Woe to drunken politicians (28:1–29)
  - 2. Woe to religious formalists (29:1–14)
  - 3. Woe to those who hide plans from God (29:15–24)
  - 4. Woe to the pro-Egyptian party (30:1–33)
  - 5. Woe to those who trust in horses and chariots (31:1–32:20)
  - 6. Woe to the Assyrian destroyer (33:1–24)
  - 7. A cry for justice against the nations, particularly Edom (34:1–35:10)

### **II. Historical Interlude (36:1–39:8)**

- A. Sennacherib's Attempt to Capture Jerusalem (36:1–37:38)
- B. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery (38:1–22)
- C. Babylonian Emissaries to Jerusalem (39:1–8)

### **III. Salvation (40:1–66:24)**

- A. Deliverance from Captivity (40:1–48:22)
  - 1. Comfort to the Babylonian exiles (40:1–31)
  - 2. The end of Israel's misery (41:1–48:22)
- B. Sufferings of the Servant of the Lord (49:1–57:21)
  - 1. The Servant's mission (49:1–52:12)
  - 2. Redemption by the Suffering Servant (52:13–53:12)
  - 3. Results of the Suffering Servant's redemption (54:1–57:21)
- C. Future Glory of God's People (58:1–66:24)
  - 1. Two kinds of religion (58:1–14)
  - 2. Plea to Israel to forsake their sins (59:1–19)
  - 3. Future blessedness of Zion (59:20–61:11)
  - 4. Nearing of Zion's deliverance (62:1–63:6)
  - 5. Prayer for national deliverance (63:7–64:12)
  - 6. The Lord's answer to Israel's supplication (65:1–66:24)