

DIGGING DEEPER

Isaiah

I. IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES ABOUT ISAIAH

2 Kings 19-20; Isaiah; Mt. 1:22-23, 3:3, 8:16-17, 15:7-9; Lk. 4:17-19; John 12:35-43; Acts 8:26-35; Rom. 15:12

II. ISAIAH'S CHRONOLOGY

BIBLICAL EVENT	KLASSEN DATE	REFERENCE
David's reign	1025-985 B.C.	
Solomon's reign	985-945 B.C.	
Ahab's reign	889-870 B.C.	
Elijah's ministry	889-868 B.C.	
Elisha's ministry	868-808 B.C.	
King Uzziah (Azariah) reigns in Judah	784-732 B.C.	2 Kgs. 15:1-2
Isaiah is born	765 B.C.	
Ministry of Hosea in Israel	784-724 B.C.	Hosea
Ministry of Amos in Israel	774-763 B.C.	Amos
Death of Uzziah & Isaiah's Vision	732 B.C.	Isa. 6
Reign of Jotham & son Ahaz	732-717 B.C.	2 Chr. 27:1-2
Israel conquers some of Judah	732 B.C.	2 Chr. 28:5-8
Isaiah prophesies of Israel's captivity	732 B.C.	Isa. 7:17-8:22
Hezekiah begins reign with Ahaz	727 B.C.	
Revival comes to Israel	727-723 B.C.	

Fall of Israel to Assyria	721 B.C.	2 Kgs. 17:6
God saves Jerusalem from Assyria	710 B.C.	2 Kgs. 19
Death of Hezekiah	697 B.C.	2 Kgs. 20:21
Manasseh reigns in Judah	697-642 B.C.	2 Chr. 32:33
Judah becomes vassal of Assyria	688-625 B.C.	
Isaiah martyred	681 B.C.	

III. THE WORLD AND FAMILY OF ISAIAH

A. Isaiah's World

Isaiah was born into the world of Hosea and Amos, only Isaiah lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Uzziah was king, and for the most part, he was faithful to the Lord. God blessed Judah and Uzziah, and Judah enjoyed a period of prosperity under Uzziah similar to their northern brothers and sisters in Israel.

But Isaiah lived 84 years, through the reign of four kings, and the world around him underwent great change. By the year 750 B.C., when Isaiah was still a teenager, Assyria had become the dominant world power. Assyria was too busy with other nations to be of great concern to Judah during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, but by the time Jotham's son Ahaz ascended the throne, the threat of Assyria loomed large over the nation. Much of Isaiah's ministry was as a prophet to the kings of Judah; therefore, the state of world affairs and Judah's foreign policy is of importance in understanding the messages of the prophet.

God not only showed Isaiah that the Northern Kingdom of Israel would fall to the mighty Assyrian empire (11 years before it happened), He also showed the prophet that Judah would not be conquered by the Assyrians. God was reserving them for the Babylonians, still a small and almost insignificant nation on the world stage in Isaiah's day.

B. Isaiah's Family

We know little for certain from the Bible concerning Isaiah's family. His father was Amoz, about whom nothing else is said. Jewish tradition, however, says that Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah, making Isaiah the cousin of King Uzziah. This tradition fits well with the scriptural testimony that Isaiah was often in the company of the royalty of Judah. Isaiah's writing also has an educated, even scholarly quality, indicating a possible royal education.

The only other mention of family in the Scripture concerns his wife and children. He calls his wife “the prophetess” (Isa. 8:3), and his two sons bore prophetic names: Maher-shalal-hash-baz which means “the spoil speeds, the prey hastes,” and Shear-jashub which means “a remnant shall return.”

IV. ISAIAH’S SIGNIFICANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. Isaiah’s Vision and Call (Isa. 6)

1. Took place in the year that King Uzziah died.
2. Isaiah saw a vision of God on His throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by six winged angelic seraphim crying “holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.”
3. Isaiah recognized his own unworthiness and cried “Woe is me!... For my eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts.” One of the seraphim brought a coal from the altar and touched Isaiah’s lips to purify and cleanse him.
4. Then The Lord God issued the call “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Isaiah’s response was immediate. “Here am I! Send me.”
5. Therefore God sent Isaiah but warned him that men would not hear, understand, or receive his message. No one would believe what God would say through His prophet until the cities of Judah were laid waste and most of the inhabitants removed from the land.

B. Conflict with King Ahaz

1. When Ahaz became king at age 20, Assyria was a threat to every nation in the region. Ahaz lacked the faith of his father and grandfather; he was one of the most wicked kings of Judah.
2. King Pekah of Israel and King Rezin of Syria had formed an alliance against the growing and dangerous kingdom of Assyria. These kings invited King Ahaz of Judah to join them in standing against Assyria. When he refused, they attacked Jerusalem, trying to replace Ahaz with someone more cooperative. Ahaz, fearful and lacking any faith whatsoever, wanted to appeal to Assyria to help him against Israel and Syria.
3. While Ahaz was deciding what to do, God sent Isaiah to him. Isaiah called upon Ahaz not to trust in any of these kings, but instead to turn to the Lord and trust Him. God promised security for the nation if the king and people would return in loyalty and faithfulness to worshipping Him alone.
4. Ahaz refused and instead offered his son as a burnt offering to pagan gods and then contacted the king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser III. Ahaz sent him gold and silver from the temple and offered to become Assyria’s vassal state. Tiglath-pileser accepted and attacked both Syria and Israel.
5. The price for survival at the hands of Assyria was enormous.
 - a. After Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus, Ahaz went there to pay tribute to the mighty Assyrians. While in the city he saw a beautifully crafted altar

used for sacrifices to the gods of Damascus. He sent the plans back to the chief priest in Jerusalem and had him duplicate the altar, putting it in the place of the Altar of Sacrifice in front of the temple.

- b. Upon his return, Ahaz led the priests to regularly offer sacrifices to the pagan gods on this foreign altar in the very courtyard of the temple itself.
- c. The unfruitful alliance of Judah and Assyria also paved the way for Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom and carry its inhabitants away as captives.

C. Ministry under King Hezekiah

When Ahaz died, he was succeeded by his son Hezekiah. The opposite of his father, Hezekiah loved the Lord. He was probably the most faithful of Judah's kings during the divided monarchy and is often called "good king Hezekiah."

D. Martyrdom by King Manasseh

1. Isaiah outlived Hezekiah and continued to live during the rule of wicked King Manasseh.
2. The Bible does not record the death of Isaiah. A book written in the first century A.D. called The Ascension of Isaiah says that the king had the prophet sawed in two. It is possible that the author of Hebrews was speaking of the fate of Isaiah in **Heb. 11:37**. *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—*

V. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ

Isa. 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

1. This is a prophecy with a dual meaning and dual fulfillment.
2. God was saying immediately to Ahaz, in the time it takes for a woman to conceive and bear a child and that child grow old enough to know right and wrong, both the kings of Israel and Syria will be deposed by Assyria. This indeed came to pass as spoken by Isaiah.
3. But the Holy Spirit through Matthew makes it clear that there was a meaning to the prophecy far beyond the immediate context in which it was delivered.

Mt. 1:22-23 ²² *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

While the Hebrew of Isa. 7:14 could mean either virgin or young woman, the Greek of Mt. 1:23 can only mean virgin in the technical sense of the word. This meaning of the prophecy was fulfilled by the virgin birth of Christ.

B. Prophecy of the ministry of John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3 & Mt. 3:3)

Isaiah 40:3–5 ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; ⁵ The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Matthew 3:3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’ ”*

C. Prophecy of the Suffering Servant

Isa. 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

Mt. 8:16-17 ¹⁶ When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, ¹⁷ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”

D. The contrast of external affiliation with genuine obedience. (Isa. 29:13 & Mt. 15:6-9)

Isaiah 29:13 Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

Matthew 15:6–9 ... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ *‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”*

E. Prophecy of the character of Jesus’ ministry

Isa. 61:1-2 ¹ “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*; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Lk. 4:17-19 ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ *“The Spirit of*

the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

F. Commentary on the unbelief of men (Isa. 53:1; 6:9-10 & Jn. 12:35-43)

G. The gospel according to Isaiah

Acts 8:26-35 ²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. ²⁷ So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

³⁰ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. ³³ In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth."

³⁴ So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

H. The prophecy of the Hebrew Savior ruling over Gentiles (Isa. 11:1,10 & Rom. 15:12)

Isaiah 11:1, 10 ¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. ... ¹⁰ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

Romans 15:12 And again, Isaiah says: *"There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."*