God's Messenger of Hope

The Prophet Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is one of the most beautiful books of the Bible. Not only is it beautiful, but also it is full of valuable information that is detailed like nowhere else in scripture. The prophet Isaiah is known as the Messianic prophet more than any other, and yet there is more information in the book written by him… about the nature of God Almighty than just about anywhere else.

The book is about apostasy, it is about condemnation, it is about redemption and hope through a Messiah, and it is about the nature of our God and Creator. It is a wonderful source of prophecy concerning the coming of the Son of God, and yet nowhere else is the nature of Jehovah God revealed more openly, or detailed more clearly than in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah was immensely unpopular at times because of much of the preaching that he did. His message was intended by the Lord… to open up the ears of those who would hear the word of the Lord… To all the rest… it was intended to harden their hearts.

A bit of background is necessary on the man himself. Isaiah was the son of Amoz, who was apparently a man of humble rank. His name literally means " the salvation of Jehovah". His wife was called "the prophetess" in **Isaiah 8:3.** He had two sons, who bore symbolical names.

He exercised the functions of his office during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Uzziah reigned fifty-two years from 810-759 B.C., and Isaiah must have begun his career a few years before Uzziah's death, probably around 762 B.C. He lived till the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, and in all likelihood outlived that monarch, who died in 698 B.C., and may have been contemporary for some years with Manasseh. Thus Isaiah may have prophesied for as many as sixty-four years.

His first call to the prophetic office is recorded in Isaiah chapter 6 and we are told that it was "in the year that King Uzziah died". He exercised his ministry in a spirit of uncompromising boldness. He conceals nothing and keeps nothing back from fear of man. He was also noted for his spirituality and for his deep reverence toward "the Holy One of Israel."

In his early youth, Isaiah must have been greatly moved at the invasion of Israel by the Assyrian monarch Pul. Twenty years later, after Isaiah had entered into his office, he must have been of like mind, when again, came the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser as he began his career of conquest. Ahaz, king of Judah, during this time of crisis refused to co-operate with the kings of Israel and Syria in opposition to the Assyrians, and was on that account attacked and defeated by Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria. Ahaz, thus humbled, sided with Assyria, and sought the aid of Tiglath-Pileser against Israel and Syria.

The consequence was that Rezin and Pekah were conquered and many of the people carried captive to Assyria. Soon after this Shalmaneser determined to completely subdue the kingdom of Israel. Samaria was taken and destroyed in 722 B.C. So long as Ahaz reigned, the kingdom

of Judah was unmolested by the Assyrian power; but on his accession to the throne in 726 B.C. king Hezekiah "rebelled against the king of Assyria", in which he was encouraged by Isaiah, who exhorted the people to place all their dependence on Jehovah. Hezekiah at this time entered into an alliance with the king of Egypt.

This led the king of Assyria to threaten the king of Judah, and at length to invade the land. Sennacherib in 701 B.C. led a powerful army into Palestine. Hezekiah was reduced to despair, and submitted to the Assyrians. But after a brief interval, war broke out again, and again Sennacherib led an army into Palestine, one detachment of which threatened Jerusalem. Isaiah on that occasion encouraged Hezekiah to resist the Assyrians, whereupon Sennacherib sent a threatening letter to Hezekiah, which he "spread before the Lord". The judgment of God now fell on the Assyrian host.

Like Xerxes in Greece, Sennacherib never recovered from the shock of the disaster in Judah. He made no more expeditions against either Southern Palestine or Egypt. The remaining years of Hezekiah's reign were peaceful. Isaiah probably lived to its close, and possibly into the reign of Manasseh, but the time and manner of his death are unknown. There is a tradition that he suffered martyrdom by being “sawn in two” during the heathen reaction in the time of Manasseh. So the times that Isaiah lived in were perilous, and fraught with danger for the chosen people of God.

The book of Isaiah is 66 chapters long and is divided up into three distinct parts. In these three distinct parts he addresses a different audience each time. The first section includes everything from chapter 1 through chapter 39. This section is pointed at the nation of eighth century Israel and pronounces judgment on their immoral and idolatrous lifestyles.

The second section of the book includes everything from chapter 40 through chapter 55, and these chapters show a distinct message of hope and comfort directed to the discouraged exiles in Babylon in the first half of sixth century B.C.

The third and last section of the book, chapters 55 through 66, address the problems that the exiles faced upon their return from captivity in the last half of the sixth century B.C. In recent times Isaiah’s authorship has been called into question because of the very fact that he indeed does address three different audiences with his message. The scholars who question his authorship do so on the grounds that would have been impossible for him to address anyone other than his contemporaries.

This is preposterous and does not take into account the simple fact that the Lord, being God Almighty, can do anything He desires to do… which is one of the great messages of this very book…these scholars obviously read the book…. but upon seeing the results of their scholarship… one comes to believe they did not “hear” the message it contains.

Let’s take a look now at this great book and look individually at some of it’s themes and then let’s apply the messages we hear to the world around us today. Keep in mind that God is talking to a nation that should have been His everlasting devoted servants… instead they had forgotten Him; they did not fear Him, as they should have.

Israel at this time was a spiritual mess, and Isaiah was mocked as he spoke these messages most of the time. Some of the language in these passages is stunning in it’s violence, and all of it is beautiful in the expression of mercy, kindness greatness or glory. There is much that we can take from this if we remember that as God spoke to the Israel of that time… so He speaks across the centuries to us through these scriptures… as the church is now the Spiritual Israel. Let us not forget that. We have **Malachi 3:6** to remind us that our God does not change. He is the same then, as He is now and always will be.

The Nature of our God and Creator

The Glory of God and man's uncleanness …**6:1-13**

The wrath of God against His enemies' **13:4-16**

Showing scorn to the King of Babylon in his fall due to God's punishment **14:9-11**

Wrath of God upon the nations **34:1-10**

The Greatness of God **40:12-23**

God has no equal **40:25-28**

God's Great Mercy **40:29-31**

God's Glory is His alone and He is the True God **42:8**

Purpose of God's creation of man **43:7**

There is no other God **44:6-8**

God confirms His Greatness **44:24-25**

God declares what is right **45:18-19**

God does what He says He will do **46:8-13**

God laments man's lack of hearing **48:17-18**

God's ways **55:8-9**

God's Righteous Judgment upon Israel in favor of those who seek Him **65:1-7**

God's Judgment upon those who forsake Him and reward for His servants **65:11-16**

Apostasy, Condemnation and Chastisement

Forsaking God and religion that is worthless **1:1-18**

Idolatry **2:5-10, 2:17-22**

Woe to those who lack wisdom **5:20-25**

Seek God **8:12-15, 8:19**

Folly **22:12-14**

Judgment upon the earth **24:1-6, 17-23**

Blindness through disobedience **29:9-16**

Man is fleeting… the word of God is forever **40:6-8**

God’s regards the idols of the nations and their worthlessness **41:21-24, 29**

Scorn for the futility of idols **44:9-11, 14-20, 46:5-7**

Condemnation for false religion **58:1-12**

Our separation from God **59:1-4**

Isaiah’s condemnation of Israel’s blindness and sin **64:4-7**

True and False worship **66:1-4**

Redemption and hope… the Messianic message

Salvation through obedience **1:18-20**

Prophecy of the day of Pentecost **2:1-4**

Prophecy concerning Immanuel, “God with us” **7:14-15**

The Prince of Peace **9:2-7**

The Root of Jesse **11:1-10**

God is my salvation **12:1-3**

Peace through trusting God **26:3**

The precious cornerstone **28:16-18**

Salvation for Zion **35:3-4, 8-10**

The preparation for the coming salvation of Christ **40:3-5**… see **Matthew 3:3**

The Lord is with us **40:10**

The coming of the Lord’s Servant **42:1-6**

The Servant comes **49:1-6, 10-13**

God’s remembrance of Zion **49:14-18**

God’s comfort of Zion **51:12-16**

God’s redemption **52:9-10**

The Suffering of the Servant **53**

Through the Servant we have peace **54:7-10, 17**

Come to God and live **55:1-3, 6-7**

God's healing for the sinner **57:15-18**

God's Blessings to the Spiritual Zion… the church **60:10-14**

The Preincarnate Christ speaks to His followers **61:1-7**

A new name and a new relationship to God **62:2** and **62:5**

God is our Father **64:8**

The Glory of the New Creation **65:17-19**

The Summation of the book of Isaiah

God's promises to the faithful and the wicked **66:14-18, 22-24**