

Isaiah

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? God judges his people for their sin but promises his salvation.

WHO WROTE IT? Isaiah is the author.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? Isaiah wrote in the 700s B.C.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? During the period of the divided kingdom of Israel.

THE BREAKDOWN

PART 1: JUDGMENT (CHAPTERS 1-39)

- Chapters 1-5: God's charges against Judah
- Chapter 6: Isaiah's call
- Chapters 7-12: Promises of salvation
- Chapters 13-23: Judgment against specific nations
- Chapters 24-27: More promises of salvation
- Chapters 28-33: Woes to various groups of people
- Chapters 34-35: More promises of salvation
- Chapters 36-39: Historical events leading up to the exile

PART 2: SALVATION (CHAPTERS 40-66)

- Chapters 40-48: God will deliver his people from captivity
- Chapters 49-57: The Suffering Servant as Savior
- Chapters 58-66: Everlasting Judgment and salvation

KEY CONCEPTS

- The Holy One of Israel
- The day of the Lord
- Salvation
- My servant

READING TIME

18 HOURS



760 B.C. +
AMOS BECOMES A PROPHET

753 +
HOSEA BECOMES A PROPHET

742 +
MICAH BECOMES A PROPHET

740 +
ISAIAH BECOMES A PROPHET

735 +
AMAZ BECOMES KING OF JUDAH

732 +
HOSHEA BECOMES KING OF ISRAEL

722 +
ISRAEL FALLS TO THE ASSYRIANS

715 +
HEZEKIAH BECOMES KING OF JUDAH

701 +
SENNACHERIB SURROUNDS JERUSALEM

697 +
MANASSEH BECOMES KING OF JUDAH

681 +
ISAAH'S MINISTRY ENDS

640 +
JOSIAH BECOMES KING OF JUDAH

WHAT'S THE POINT OF
Isaiah?
+++

Sin is serious,
but God will
forgive and
restore.

1:2-4 In spite of the fact that the people of Judah had God—the perfect parent—to lead them, they still went wrong. They were responsible for their sins and the consequences that would surely follow. Even though some of our problems are inherited from our parents, we are ultimately held accountable for our actions. Taking responsibility for our problems is an essential part of our spiritual renewal and growth.

1:5-6 Because the people of Judah refused to see the truth and admit the seriousness of their problems, they continued to suffer unnecessarily. When we refuse to see the truth about our failures and do not admit our need of God's cleansing and forgiveness, we often suffer in ways we don't have to. These are some of the destructive consequences of trying to manage our own lives. God wants us to know that we can safely start to deal with truth and safely admit our failures in his presence. All we have to do is trust him to bring us healing and forgiveness.

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• **PRIORITIES.** Some men think serving God is okay, but it's a part-time thing; they give God whatever energy and time they have left after doing what they think is most important. Isaiah lived by a different standard. From the time he answered God's call, he became consumed with his mission. God's will—whatever it may be—is the only thing worth spending our whole life doing.



Have you ever in weakness found renewed strength through the words of a parent, spouse, or friend? The right words at the right time restore our courage and keep us from despair. That's how we feel as we read the words of Judah's greatest preacher—the prophet Isaiah. His words overflow with pathos and passion, whether he is talking about judgment, healing, or the majesty of God. Throughout the book there are so many references to the coming Messiah that Isaiah is sometimes called the Fifth Gospel.

Isaiah began ministering in Judah around 740 B.C. He witnessed the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel, and he warned his tiny nation of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, of similar judgment. In the first part of the book, chapters 1 through 39, Isaiah spoke of judgment and hope, warning that just as God used Assyria to judge Israel, He would use Babylon to judge Judah. The last part of Isaiah, chapters 40 through 66, is full of God's encouragement for the future exiles. These are some of the most comforting passages in the Bible.

Isaiah's words and predictions give us never-ending strength. If you're low today, listen to what Isaiah said in chapter 40, verses 30 and 31: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."



KEY THOUGHT:

God is both our Majestic Lord
and our Suffering Servant, and by
waiting on Him we can renew our strength
(see Isaiah 6:1; 53:3; 40:31).



KEY VERSE:

"For as the heavens are higher than
the earth, so are My ways higher
than your ways, and My thoughts
than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:9



KEY ACTION:

We need a revelation of God's glory
that makes us cry, "Here am I! Send me!"
(see Isaiah 6:8).



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, may I be in perfect peace
because my mind is stayed on You.

ISAIAH

ISAIAH IS LIKE A MINIATURE Bible. The first thirty-nine chapters (like the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament) are filled with judgment upon immoral and idolatrous men. Judah has sinned; the surrounding nations have sinned; the whole earth has sinned. Judgment must come, for God cannot allow such blatant sin to go unpunished forever. But the final twenty-seven chapters (like the twenty-seven books of the New Testament) declare a message of hope. The Messiah is coming as a Savior and a Sovereign to bear a cross and to wear a crown.

Isaiah's prophetic ministry, spanning the reigns of four kings of Judah covers at least forty years. *Yeshay'Yahu* and its shortened form *Yesh'alah* mean "Yahweh Is Salvation." This name is an excellent summary of the contents of the book. The Greek form in the Septuagint is *Hesaias*, and the Latin form is *Esaias* or *Isaias*.

WATCH WORDS

- virgin (a young, unmarried woman who has not had sex)—7:14 (also 23:4, 12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5)
- YAH (the Lord God Almighty)—12:2
- salvation (deliverance from distress and the resultant victory and well-being)—49:6 (also 12:2; 45:8; 51:6; 8; 52:10; 56:1; 62:1)
- sign (something marked off or made distinct)—55:13 (also 7:14; 19:20)
- everlasting (eternal and hidden)—60:19 (also 9:7; 30:8; 40:28; 64:4)

SPOTLIGHT

SOMEBODY'S COMING

Seven centuries after Isaiah, Jesus the Messiah showed up, fulfilling these detailed predictions. (Major prophecies appear in bold type.)

- 6:9-10** The Messiah will puzzle his listeners, of whom some will be turned off.
- 7:13-14** His mother will be a virgin! She'll call him Immanuel.
- 8:14** The Jews will stumble over him.
- 9:1-7** He will bring great light and liberation, especially in Galilee.
- 11:1-10** He will be anointed by the Holy Spirit. He will make perfect decisions, resulting in peace.
- 28:16** He will be like a firm cornerstone (see 1 Peter 2:4-6).
- 35:5-6** He will heal the disabled.
- 40:3** A forerunner will announce him.
- 40:11** He will be caring and gentle like a shepherd.
- 42:1-7** He will be sensitive, fair, and illuminating.
- 49:1-7** He will be God's unique messenger.
- 52-53** He will suffer an excruciating death in order to pay for our sins.
- 59:20** He will show up in Jerusalem as a Redeemer.
- 61:1-3** He will bring good news to the oppressed.

BASIC SURVEY

ISAIAH

AUTHOR: Isaiah, the son of Amoz (?).

DATE: Around 740 to 680 BC, starting "in the year that King Uzziah died" (61 KJV).

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

A coming Messiah will save people from their sins.

DETAILS, PLEASE

Like most prophets, Isaiah announced the bad news of punishment for sin. But he also described a coming Messiah who would be "wounded for our transgressions. . . bruised for our iniquities. . . and with his stripes we are healed" (53:5 KJV). Called to the ministry through a stunning vision of God in heaven (chapter 6), Isaiah wrote a book that some call "the fifth Gospel" for its predictions of the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ some seven hundred years later. These prophecies of redemption balance the depressing promises of God's discipline against Judah and Jerusalem, which were overrun by Babylonian armies about a century later. Isaiah's prophecy ends with a long section (chapters 40-66) describing God's restoration of Israel. His promised salvation, and His eternal kingdom.

QUOTABLE

- > "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory" (6:3 NKJV).
- > Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (7:14 KJV).
- > For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (9:6 KJV).
- > We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (53:6 NIV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Isaiah had two children with strange, prophetic names. Shear-jashub (7:3) means "a remnant shall return," and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:3) means "haste

to the spoil.” Shear-jashub’s name carried God’s promise that exiled Jews would one day return home. Maher-shalal-hash-baz’s name assured the king of Judah that his country’s enemies would be attacked by Assyrian armies.

SO WHAT?

Early in His ministry, Jesus said He fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah: “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; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (61:1–2 NKJV). It’s amazing how much God cares about us!

READ ISAIAH 1-2.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 124. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 119. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 119. →

HEART OF THE BOOK

ISAIAH—THE ROYAL PROPHET

Isaiah saw visions of God “during the years when Uzziyah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1 NLT). This was from approximately 740 to 680 BC. At the beginning of this time, the powerful northern kingdom of Aram was the greatest threat to Israel and Judah. But during Ahaz’s reign, in 732 BC, the Assyrians conquered Aram. From then on, Assyria was the main enemy of God’s people.

Isaiah is called “the royal prophet” because, according to rabbinic tradition, his father, Amoz, was the brother of Amaziah, king of Judah. This is not known for certain, however. Isaiah’s unnamed wife is called “the prophetess” (Isaiah 8:3 KJV), indicating that she may have had a prophetic anointing as well. They had two sons, both named after major historical events.

More than any other prophet, Isaiah spoke about the coming Messiah, and his many prophecies were fulfilled in the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ. He also wrote detailed descriptions of the coming kingdom of heaven (Isaiah 2:1–5; 65:17–25). In addition, he mentioned the destruction of the wicked in hell (Isaiah 66:24), and Jesus quoted him in Mark 9:47–48.

Scholars believe that Isaiah wrote his book between 701 and 681 BC. Many people argue that Isaiah didn’t compose the entire book, but only wrote chapters 1–39, and that a later writer penned chapters 40–66. But the unique expression “the Holy One of Israel,” used almost exclusively in Isaiah, appears throughout the entire book, arguing strongly for its unity.



Isaiah was a prophet who spoke about the coming of Jesus.

READ ISAIAH 3 AND 8.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 124. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 120. →

CLOSER LOOK

PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH



Isaiah's prophecy describes the suffering that Christ would endure on the cross, which is shown in the painting *The Raising of the Cross* by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640).

to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7 NKJV). When Jesus was accused of many crimes before Pilate, he remained silent, to the governor’s astonishment (Matthew 27:13–14). “He was taken from prison and from judgment” (Isaiah 53:8 NKJV). Jesus didn’t receive a fair trial (Matthew 27:24; John 19:12–16).

Isaiah continued, “And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death” (Isaiah 53:9 NKJV). Jesus died between two criminals; then a rich disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, received permission to bury Him in his own new tomb (Matthew 27:38, 57–60).

Why did Jesus suffer so? The prophecy explains: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. . . we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . He bore the sin of many” (Isaiah 53:5–6, 12 NKJV).

READ ISAIAH 52:13–53:12 AND ACTS 8:26–40.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 121.



CLOSER LOOK

GOD’S COMING KINGDOM

Genesis 2–3 described a paradise lost, and Isaiah wrote that paradise will be restored on earth: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:6, 9 NKJV).

The departed of all ages will resurrect from the dead (Isaiah 26:19), and death will also be no more: “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8 NIV).

After the Messiah defeats all their enemies and there is no more war, blacksmiths will busily transform swords into plowshares. People will be occupied with peaceful farming. The Messiah will “settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4 NIV).

God declared: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying” (Isaiah 65:17–19 NASB). (See also Isaiah 11:1–10.)

READ ISAIAH 61 AND 65.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 124.



Isaiah described God’s coming kingdom as a place where wolves and lambs could dwell together.

HIDDEN TREASURE

A READY, WILLING SPIRIT

Isaiah wrote, “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6:8 NKJV). So God made him a prophet and a messenger. One thing God loves greatly is a willing spirit, especially when it comes to speaking His word to others. Isaiah also prophesied, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news... who announces salvation” (Isaiah 52:7 NASB). This is why Paul says that a vital part of every Christian’s spiritual armor is to have our “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15 NIV). It is our obligation and privilege to preach the Gospel.

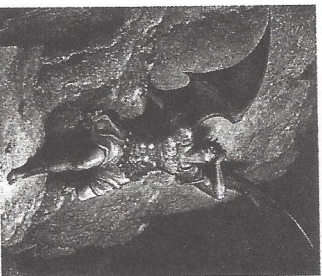
READ ISAIAH 5-6.

HIDDEN TREASURE

SATAN’S FALL FROM HEAVEN

Isaiah gave a prophecy against the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4), but this also describes the fall of Satan who empowered him: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . I will be like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:12-14 NKJV). The devil’s sin was being “puffed up with pride” (1 Timothy 3:6 NKJV). Ezekiel also described his fall: “You were in Eden. . . . You were the anointed cherub. . . . And you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:13-14, 16 NASB). Satan still has access to heaven to accuse the saints, but this will soon end (Revelation 12:7-10).

READ ISAIAH 14 AND EZEKIEL 28.



The fall of Satan is described by Isaiah and Ezekiel. Gustave Doré (1832–1883) depicted Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

HIDDEN TREASURE

GOD’S WONDERFUL THOUGHTS

One of the most profound passages in the Bible is this: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV). God is aware of facts that we can’t possibly know. That’s why we must look to Him for wisdom. This is also why Solomon said, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5 NKJV). We can trust Him because He loves us. “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil” (Jeremiah 29:11 KJV). (See also Romans 8:28.)

READ ISAIAH 40 AND 55.

HIDDEN TREASURE

PROPHECIES ABOUT CYRUS

The king of the Persians, Cyrus II, founded the vast Persian Empire. Some 140 years previously, Isaiah prophesied about him: “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him. . . . I have even called you by your name” (Isaiah 45:1, 4 NKJV). Also Isaiah prophesied, “He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives” (Isaiah 45:13 KJV). God also declared, “He. . . shall [say] to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’” (Isaiah 44:28 NKJV). In fulfillment, in 539 BC Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home. God accurately declares the future far in advance—then moves mightily to bring about His will.

READ ISAIAH 44:1-45:13.

Don't Look to Egypt

ISAIAH, CONSIDERED BY MANY to be the greatest Old Testament prophet, had a long public ministry that spanned the reigns of at least four kings of Judah (Uzziah through Hezekiah, about 740-680 B.C.). Because Isaiah enjoyed such easy access to each of these rulers, some believe that royal blood coursed through his own veins.

Jewish tradition suggests that in the end, the wicked King Manasseh spilled Isaiah's blood by sawing him in two—a tradition some believe finds support in Hebrews 11:37. But no one knows for sure.

What made Isaiah so great? Like most of the prophets, Isaiah uncompromisingly called people to faith in "the Holy One of Israel" (one of his favorite names for God). He lived during a time of great material prosperity and greater spiritual apathy. Isaiah thundered against his countrymen's slide into spiritual decay.

Too often we shake our heads at the foolishness of the Hebrew kings while at the same time imitating their errors.

Most significant of all, Isaiah proclaimed that one day God would send a Redeemer, the Messiah, who would lead his people into a time of unparalleled joy and health (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 54).

Yet Isaiah spent much of his career speaking not of distant events, but warning of current temptations. Time after time he warned rulers not to look for political and military help from the major powers of the day, but to depend upon God for protection. "What sorrow awaits those who look to Egypt for help," Isaiah declared, "trusting their horses, chariots, and charioteers and depending on the strength of human armies instead of looking to the Lord, the Holy One of Israel" (31:1; see also 20:5-6; 30:1-7; 39:1-7).

Isaiah hated the thought that any true follower of God would intentionally turn from reliance on the Lord for help from more "tangible" and "practical" sources. Most of the kings of Judah rejected Isaiah's advice, but his prophecies proved to be accurate nevertheless.

Too often we shake our heads at the foolishness of the Hebrew kings while at the same time imitating their errors. How easy to claim allegiance to God, even as we form partnerships and make alliances with ungodly sources in an effort to cover our backs. Instead, we ought to act on the promise given through Isaiah: "Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone.

Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will not be put to shame. . . . Who among you fears the Lord and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God" (50:7, 10).

That's good advice for ancient kings—and for us! But God's promises will do us good only if we act on his commands.

THE POINT: God calls us to rely on him alone.

Isaiah

A Faithless Land

Isaiah 1:21-23

SOMETIMES GOOD THINGS can turn bad through indifference and neglect. That's what happened to the city of Jerusalem.

Once hailed as God's shining jewel, the holy city became a place of despair and spiritual poverty. Contrasting *then* and *now*, Isaiah wrote that Jerusalem, once faithful, "has become a prostitute." Once just and righteous, the city "is now filled with murderers." Jerusalem's leaders are "rebels, the companions of thieves."

What transformed the city rulers into despicable despots? The main problem was failure to do what God commanded.

There are many ways to disobey God, and the leaders of Jerusalem probably found multiple ways to provoke God's wrath. But in this passage God chose to speak through Isaiah about one offense in particular: "All of them love bribes and demand payoffs, but they refuse to defend the cause of orphans or fight for the rights of widows."

In our age, the lure of money has brought down profit-hungry corporations. Greed has tarnished politicians who have let graft and corruption cloud their vision. The love of money is not a new problem. Executives have always found the temptations of wealth hard to resist.

And while Jerusalem's leaders were holding out their hands for cash, they were turning their backs on the city's most desperate women and children, who held out their hands for a coin or a piece of bread.

Money isn't evil in itself, but combined with power, the desire for money can bring out evil desires that lurk in people's hearts. If you want to avoid the problems that plagued Jerusalem, practice a godly stewardship of your financial resources and your authority. Don't just seek to furnish your own nest; be on the lookout for others who need your help.

Spiritual Adultery

Isaiah 57:7-8

ONE OF THE BIBLE'S recurring themes is that God looks at the hearts of men and women just as much as he looks at their actions. And we see time and time again in Scripture that God finds plenty to look at in our hearts. People harbor hidden wishes of rebellion against God. Sure, they know that God is God and that they should obey him. But at the same time, they feel deep inside that life might really be better if God were out of the picture and they could live as they please.

The prophet Isaiah made an insightful observation about the heart in this passage. Condemning the people of Israel for their worship of other gods, he compared their idolatry to prostitution. "You have committed adultery on every high mountain," he wrote, speaking the words God gave him. "There you have worshiped idols and have been unfaithful to me. . . . You have left me and climbed into bed with these detestable gods."

Long after Isaiah's time, Jesus spoke about the heart as the place where sinful actions are born and grow: "Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Idolatry is like spiritual lust, and both lust and idolatry are attitudes that begin in the heart. Over time, the heart begins to act out these forbidden desires. When that happens, adultery is the result. Adultery can be sexual or spiritual. In either case, the problem begins long before the actual act is ever carried out.

If you want to guard your life and keep your actions pure, begin by guarding your heart. Even though it may not seem evident today, the unexamined desires that lurk in your heart will be the cause of many actions you take tomorrow.

Personal Gold from MICHAEL YOUSSEF

"DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY"

No place on earth is immune from natural disaster, disease, or human conflict. In the days of the prophets Jeremiah and Micah, false preachers were proclaiming a false peace, a man-made peace without God. They created a slogan, saying "Peace, peace" even in the face of dire circumstances and sin. Jeremiah said, "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say" (Jeremiah 6:14, NIV).

God, however, declared that they were proclaiming peace "when there is no peace." His judgment was sure: "They will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD (Jeremiah 6:14-15, NIV).

Things are no different today. There are many who assure those living lives contrary to God's Word: "Don't worry, everybody is doing this. God doesn't really care about such minor things. After all, you're not hurting anyone." They are saying, in essence, "peace, peace" when there is no peace.

And God responds, "There is no peace for the rebellious person." All sin is serious to God. Sin must never be trivialized by man-made justifications. Only God's forgiveness can bring genuine peace.

The prophet Isaiah gave this word from the Lord:

"I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway! I will lead them. I will comfort those who mourn, bringing words of praise to their lips. May they have abundant peace, both near and far," says the LORD, who heals them. "But those who still reject me are like the restless sea, which is never still but continually churns up mud and dirt. There is no peace for the wicked," says my God. (Isaiah 57:18-21, NLT)

Others offer a hollow solution to those who are undergoing great sorrow or pain, saying, "Don't worry, this will pass. You'll get over it." They are saying, "Peace, peace." And God responds, "There is no peace." No pills, no amount of sleep, no amount of time alone can heal a wounded spirit. Only God's forgiveness, comfort, and mercy can heal a wounded spirit and restore genuine peace.

Jesus said clearly, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27, NLT). With these words Jesus described the root causes of worry and anxiety, which for all of us are fear and a troubled heart.

1:9-20 Although the people of Judah were very religious, they were accused of being as evil as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They gave sacrifices to pay for their sins, but they felt no remorse. They needed to see the truth about their spiritual condition, acknowledge the depth of their sin, and turn to God for cleansing and renewal. Religious activity is no substitute for a genuine life with God. It is only when we honestly confess our sins and ask God to help us that he will make us "as white as snow."

ISAIAH

THE BIG PICTURE

Though it is never easy, facing the truth brings healing. God spoke through Isaiah to address the sins of the people of Judah. Over the centuries the people of Judah had turned away from God and practiced idolatry. They had developed corrupt and oppressive behaviors. And though repeatedly confronted by Isaiah, the people refused to admit their sin. Instead, they blamed God for their sufferings and wondered why he refused to bless them.

The first part of Isaiah (1:1 — 39:8) is dominated by Isaiah's message of judgment. The Assyrians had recently destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and now threatened to destroy Judah as well. God told the people of Judah that deliverance would come, but only if they repented of their sins and turned to him for help. The people of Judah only trusted in God superficially. They sought to save themselves through clever political alliances with Assyria and Egypt. Their human attempts to escape the suffering of exile could never bring about their permanent deliverance. God allowed Judah to survive the attacks of Egypt and Assyria, but a few generations later, Judah was ultimately crushed by Babylon.

The second part of Isaiah (40:1 — 66:24) is dominated by God's message of hope. In spite of Judah's unworthiness, God promised that he would lead his people out of their Babylonian captivity. He foretold the ministry of his suffering Servant and his ultimate victory that would culminate in a new heaven and a new earth. Through the words of Isaiah we discover that God's ultimate purpose for his people is blessing and restoration.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

TRUTH BRINGS HEALING

Because the truth often hurts, we may try to protect ourselves from it. When Isaiah told the people of Judah the truth about their sin, they chose to hide from the truth. They refused to admit that they had failed. By failing to face the truth, they also refused to experience healing. Our spiritual renewal can only progress to the degree that we open ourselves to the truth, regardless of how painful that might be.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS LEADS TO BLAMING

Instead of admitting their sin and responding to the

A. MESSAGE OF CONFRONTATION

TO JUDAH (1:1 — 39:8)

1. Judah is Confronted About Her Sin (1:1 — 12:6)
2. God Judges Judah's Oppressors (13:1 — 23:18)
3. A Promise of God's Final Victory (24:1 — 27:13)
4. Judah's Choice of Restoration or Disaster (28:1 — 31:9)
5. Salvation is Coming, but the Path is Hard (32:1 — 35:10)
6. Historical Interlude: Hezekiah's Tests (36:1 — 39:8)

B. MESSAGE OF HOPE TO BABYLONIAN

EXILES (40:1 — 66:24)

1. A Promise of God's Deliverance (40:1 — 48:22)
2. Deliverance Through a Suffering Servant (49:1 — 55:13)
3. Israel's Eventual Exaltation (56:1 — 66:24)

Essential Facts

PURPOSE:

To confront the people of Judah with their sin and to lead them to rebuild their lives based on God's promises.

AUTHOR:

The prophet Isaiah.

AUDIENCE:

Isaiah 1 – 39 was spoken to the people of Judah before their exile; Isaiah 40 – 66 records a message of hope for future generations of exiled Jews.

DATE WRITTEN:

The book includes oracles given throughout Isaiah's ministry (740 – 681 BC).

SETTING:

The land of Judah before its destruction by Babylon.

KEY VERSE:

"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (53:5).

KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Isaiah with Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah and with King Cyrus of Persia.

KEY PLACES:

Judah, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia.

blindness, we will also become expert at shifting blame. The painful circumstances we may suffer as a result will be a direct consequence of our own failures and refusal to see the truth. We must take responsibility for our actions if we desire to progress spiritually.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THROUGH CONFRONTATION

God wanted to restore the people of Judah. Through Isaiah, God confronted them with the truth of their sin. Isaiah's words of confrontation, however, were punctuated by the message of God's love and hope. The model of confrontation found in the book of Isaiah can help us as we intervene in the lives of the people we love who are trapped in ongoing cycles of sin. Our words of confrontation need to be balanced by words and actions that demonstrate our love and forgiveness. Confrontation rendered in anger will only bring about greater conflict and deeper destruction.

THE MAN ISAIAH

Isaiah was a prophet to the kingdom of Judah. He prophesied that Babylon would bring judgment on Judah almost 100 years before the Babylonian kingdom existed.

ISAIAH

What's in a Name?

The name Isaiah means "The LORD is salvation."

IN A NUTSHELL

This book is often divided into two major sections. There are 66 chapters in Isaiah, the same as the number of books of the Bible. The message in the first 39 chapters relates to judgment and sin in humankind, and the 27 remaining chapters speak of redemption and forgiveness, themes found in both the Old and New Testaments.

MARTYRED BY MANASSEH?

It is traditionally believed that Isaiah died when he was sawn in half, possibly by King Manasseh.

DID YOU KNOW?

▶ Isaiah is often referred to as "The Messianic Prophet" and his book called "The Gospel of Isaiah" because of his many references to the coming Messiah. The book of Isaiah contains more direct prophecies concerning Christ's coming than any other book of the Old Testament.

▶ The New Testament quotes Isaiah 75 times.

BY THE NUMBERS

66 CHAPTERS
1,292 VERSES
34,401 WORDS

LIFE LESSONS: Trust Jesus as Savior of the world because he fulfilled ancient prophecies (53:12).

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW ISAIAH?

ISAIAH IN REVIEW

"?" CRYPTIC PHRASES

1. What are Kir and Ar?
- A. Musical instruments
- B. King Hezekiah's children
- C. Headwater rivers in Assyria
- D. Stronghold cities of Moab



HOT SEAT

2. As king of Assyria, I started by invading Judah, then proceeded to Jerusalem. I mocked Hezekiah, and I mocked God—after all, I had the strength and military might to walk all over these people! But, as you probably guessed, I was defeated and died in my own country. Who am I?

"?" CRYPTIC PHRASES

3. "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low," and they themselves go off to captivity. Who are they?
- A. Kings of Tyre
- B. Warriors from Assyria
- C. Moabite eunuchs
- D. Babylonian gods



TIME TRAVELER

4. You are the palace administrator for Hezekiah, king of Judah. What is your name?

"?" CRYPTIC PHRASES

5. What is the meaning of the word Hephzibah?
- A. In great distress
- B. My delight is in her
- C. The sinner who reaches
- D. Would not be gathered



HOT SEAT

6. I had a busy night! I am an angel of the Lord, and I was sent to destroy the Assyrian army advancing against Jerusalem. How many of them did I strike down before daybreak?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

7. What will be given the new name Hephzibah?



WHO DUNNIT?

8. Who named their son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz?

- A. King Uzziah
- B. King Jotham
- C. The prophet Isaiah
- D. The prophet Uriah

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

9. According to Isaiah's prophecies, who would "rule over" Jerusalem and Judah?

- A. Assyrians
- B. Babylonians
- C. The wicked
- D. Children

THEN VS. NOW

10. Isaiah spoke of a cursed ten-acre vineyard that would only produce a bath of wine. How much is a bath in gallons?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

11. Isaiah cursed Tyre and said it would be forgotten for several years, the span of a king's life. How long did he specify that would be?

- A. 65 years
- B. 70 years
- C. 75 years
- D. 80 years

WHO DUNNIT?

12. These people were committing evil. They were practicing divination and idolatry. Isaiah asked God not to forgive them or raise them up. What is the name of this evil city or nation?

- A. Tyre
- B. Babylon
- C. Israel
- D. Assyria

ANSWERS:

1. D. Zion (6:1-12)
2. C. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (2:2)
3. D. Assyria (1:1)
4. C. The wicked (1:16)
5. B. 70 years (6:5)
6. D. 80 years (1:2)
7. C. The prophet Isaiah (37:36)
8. A. King Uzziah (7:1)
9. B. Babylonians (1:10)
10. D. 10 gallons (1:9)
11. C. 75 years (1:9)
12. D. Assyria (1:9)