

Pt 8: Here I Am, Lord



Isaiah



Background Notes

PURPOSE: To relay God's will through his prophets to the divided kingdoms who looked to other nations instead of to God for protection against the invading Assyrians.

AUTHOR: While Amos and Hosea prophesied to Israel just before the Assyrian exile, the prophet Isaiah was so influential that three generations of his teaching exist: before the Assyrian exile, during the Babylonian exile, and during the restoration. This part covers the first part.

DATE: Isaiah received his call in 740 BC, before the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 BC.

STYLE: Except for the retelling of a small piece of the book of Kings, the prophecies are poetic and dramatic, relaying directly the word of God, severely reprimanding his people and their enemies, but also showing his undying fidelity to his unfaithful people through messages of a future hope.



Opening Quotes

“In days to come...they shall beat their swords into plowshares.” Is 2:2

“Now that this has touched your lips, your sin is purged.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, ‘Whom shall I send?’ ‘Here I am,’ I said; ‘send me!’” Is 6:7

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” Is 7:14

“Those who walked in darkness have seen a great light... For a child is born to us... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace... from David’s throne.” Is 9:1

“On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for nations, the gentiles shall seek out.” Is 11:10

“I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one will shut, when he shuts, no one will open.” Is 22:22

“Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away.” Hos 6:4

“I will not give in to my blazing anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again; For I am God and not man.” Hos 11:9

“Woe to the complacent in Zion! Stretched comfortably on their couches... they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph!” Am 6:1

the BIG PICTURE		☞ : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		☞ : key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods	Plot	Other books related to period		stories in each period	
BC	🌐 THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	👤 THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	⚠️ EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	♣️ JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	👤 THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	👤 KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	👤 THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov, Ecc, Songs	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	👤 BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to Exiles)	
538	👤 THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	👤 THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	👤 JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	👤 APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 8: Here I Am, Lord



During the prosperous reign of King Ahaz in Judah, there was a horrible separation between the poor and the rich. Meanwhile, King Pekah of Israel had joined forces with the king of Aram to fight the Assyrian empire which was looming on the horizon. King Pekah then told King Ahaz to join them in the fight or face invasion by Israel and Aram! This only scared King Ahaz, and in desperation Ahaz decided to appeal to the Assyrians themselves! At this important point in history the prophet **Isaiah** from Judah was called by God.

God needed someone to send a message to his people who had forgotten to trust him, running to other nations instead for help. “Whom shall I send?” God asked. “Here I am, Lord,” responded Isaiah. And here are the prophecies that Isaiah was to proclaim:

Yahweh would not pay attention to the ritualistic practices of Judah which were obviously lacking in spirit. Judah was too proud of its materialistic wealth. Jerusalem, the capitol, was likened to a whore, unfaithful to Yahweh. Both Judah and Israel were like a vineyard that wasn’t producing good grapes, so God was going to destroy the vineyard, and he would do this by using the nation of Assyria.

Sure enough, because Ahaz fearfully appealed to Assyria against Israel and Aram instead of trusting God, Assyria overthrew Israel, deported the Israelites, and Judah in the meantime became subservient to Assyria as a result of their deal.

But some of Isaiah’s prophecies addressed not the impending doom of Israel and Judah, but also addressed to a remnant of Judah messages of a great hope in the more distant future, at a time when Jerusalem would even be a beacon to bring all the other nations to God!

While Isaiah predicted doom for Israel at the mercy of Assyria, He also predicted doom for Assyria, since Yahweh was only using them for punishing his people. Judah would not be doomed just yet, however.

As for the exploited lower class, Isaiah prophesied for the remnant of Judah a future kingdom ruled by a prince of peace who would ignore outside appearances, show mercy to widows and orphans and kindness to the poor. This messiah was to reign on the throne of David. A son was to be born of a virgin, and his name would be “Immanuel”, which means “God is with us.”

Isaiah’s prophecies depicted all the nations which attacked Israel and Judah as God’s “sacred warriors”, mere instruments God had used to punish His people for their unfaithfulness.

Isaiah then performed a visual prophecy. In the days when Israel ran not only to Aram but to Egypt for assistance against Assyria, Isaiah prophesied that the Assyrians would defeat Egypt along with Aram and Israel. To symbolize how shameful the Egyptians would be made at the hands of Assyria, Isaiah walked around naked and barefoot for three years!

Eventually King Sennacherib of Assyria began infiltrating Judah. King Hezekiah of Judah defended Jerusalem, and Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would in fact be liberated from Assyrian control. But Isaiah strongly criticized the exaggerated joy and celebration on the part of Judah, insisting that punishment was still threatening. The worst for Judah lay ahead.

Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the poor and the weak reached a new height when he proclaimed that in the ideal kingdom of the future, the weak would trod on the remains of the fortresses which the proud people built.

Then, in the strongest reference to the afterlife in Judah and Israel’s history so far, Isaiah pointed out that after they turned to other gods, the dead would not come back to life. Furthermore, as a pregnant woman writhes in pain to give birth to new life, the people who turned to the other nations for help would cry in pain to give birth to nothing but the wind, while the true people of Yahweh who died would rise again to new life!

Isaiah also described how Yahweh would punish the Leviathan, the mythical dragon which symbolized the original evil force of disorder. He then foretold the return of the Israelites to their promised land, to their city, Jerusalem. Isaiah had compared Judah’s alliance with Assyria as an alliance with Hell.

Isaiah had several prophecies which treated the hypocritical way that Judah practiced religion. People were honoring Yahweh with “lip-service”, and Judah’s “wise men” had a wisdom that was doomed. Service to Yahweh had just become going through the motions of human commandments and memorized lessons.

But soon God’s judgment would fall on everyone. On that day it would be realized just who Yahweh is. But before then, the following of *false* prophets and false teachings would break the walls of Jerusalem. But again, his messages of doom were also accompanied by great hope, a return to Jerusalem where peace would reign as a result of uprightness.

We then find in Isaiah an actual outbreak from the second book of Kings. To recap, King Sennacherib of Assyria had grown quite proud of himself for having overthrown Israel, and was now threatening to overthrow his vassal, Judah. King Hezekiah of Judah became fearful and prayed to Yahweh. Isaiah answered Hezekiah and told him that Yahweh’s will was that the Assyrians would not overthrow Judah at the time. Sure enough, one night when Sennacherib’s soldiers were sleeping in their camp, Yahweh’s angel killed thousands of them. Shortly thereafter, Sennacherib’s sons assassinated their father. And so the southern kingdom of Judah was spared of the fate that befell the northern kingdom of Israel, but not for long... 



Defending the Faith: Converting people

*"It doesn't seem to make a difference how much I defend the faith. I can't seem to convert anyone."
"Why do some people cling to their false beliefs, even after they are clearly shown that they are wrong?"
"I felt devastated when someone attacked my faith."*

One common mistake is to try to convince anyone of what you believe in without establishing common ground first. It would be a waste of time to try to convince anyone that Jesus is God if they do not believe in God in the first place. It would be a waste of time to try to convince a believer of God that Jesus is God, unless you first establish the historical reliability of his life, death, and resurrection. It would be a waste of time to try to convince a Fundamentalist of any Church doctrine not explicitly found in Scripture, even if the doctrine does not contradict Scripture.

Let's take some examples. The best way to talk to an atheist about God is to begin with something in common, like thoughts (discussed earlier), or the universe, discussing the absurdity that blind chance created a universe with creatures who can understand blind chance in the first place. Likewise, the best way to show a Bible-only believer that there is one, authoritative Church is to begin with the Bible, pointing out that the Bible nowhere refers to itself as the *only* source of God's teaching, but points beyond itself (2 Th 2:15, 1 Tim 3:15). It can also be shown that the table of contents is not found in the text of the Bible, but was compiled by the Church, easily shown by history.

But a worse mistake than not starting on common ground is the bigger mistake of trying to play God. *We* do not convert anyone. If anyone is converted, it is only by the grace of God. Only the Holy Spirit can convince a believer that Jesus is Lord (Mk 12:36, Lk 2:26, 1 Cor 12:3), and only God can convince a Christian which Church is the one he founded and promised to be with from the beginning until the end of time. If these things seem obvious to us, it is God's work, not ours (Jn 6:29). We are to simply scatter his seeds, allowing him to make them grow. And like the gradual growth of a seed, we can never know what influence we may have on someone's life. Someone may enter (or leave) the Church influenced by something you or I said or did years ago.

In the meantime, there is no need to be alarmed or offended by those who do not agree with us, even if they attack us. In fact, if a "Christian" attacks us, rest assured that he is already contradicting the Christ he is pushing on you (1 Cor 8:11-12)! God may even be calling those who attack us in their zeal as he called Paul when he persecuted Christians. You cannot force the cross down anyone's throat. Remember, he chooses us, we do not choose him (Jn 15:16).



Expressing the Faith: Here I Am, Lord

A song written by Dan Schutte using as its refrain the inspirational words given to us by Isaiah describing his prophetic call.

*I, the lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

***Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.***

*I the lord of snow and rain,
I have born my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send? (chorus)*

*I, the lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send? (chorus)*

↗ **Next time: "The Empires Strike Back"** ↖