

# THE PROPHET ISAIAH

## SESSION 1

**September 5, 2018**

Resource – Isaiah (A 12-Week Stud) by Drew Hunter

The Hebrew meaning of the name *Isaiah* is *the Lord saves*.

The prophecy of Isaiah alternates between threats of judgment and promises of restoration.

Isaiah reminds the people of the magnitude of their sins.

Although there is judgment God also promises to save his people.

Isaiah speaks to Judah but also to the whole world.

He rebukes all nations for their unfaithfulness to God.

He balances the message with announcements that grace will come to repentant sinners.

Central to this plan of salvation is the sending of the Messiah, a servant-king.

This servant-king will suffer for his people and be exalted in victory.

In Isaiah God is seen in all his glory and is worthy of our trust.

He is the redeemer who rescues us from sin and restores all things.

Historical Context:

The ministry of Isaiah is dated between 740 BC until 680 BC.

There were two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Isaiah proclaimed his message to those in Judah.

For centuries the people broke their covenant relationship with God.

Because of their continual rebellion, Judah eventually was sent into exile in Babylon.

<b>The Book of Isaiah</b>														
Focus	Judgment is Coming								Glory Will Follow					
<b>Divisions</b>	Judgment on Judah		Judgment on Judah's Neighbors		Judgment on All the Earth		Historical Interlude		Deliverance of God's People		Deliverance for God's People		Future of God's Delivered People	
	1	12	13	27	28	35	36	39	40	48	49	57	58	66
<b>Topics</b>	Visions		Burdens		Woes		Wars		Worship					
	Sermons of Condemnation						Parenthesis		Sermons of Comfort					
<b>Place</b>	Judah & Her Neighbors								Israel & the World					
<b>Time</b>	About 40 Years (722-681 B.C.)								Thousands of Years					
<b>Author</b>	The Prophet Isaiah													

The prophecies of Isaiah cover three different historical backgrounds:  
Isaiah 1-39                      His own context in the eighth century BC  
Isaiah 40-55                    Israel in exile in Babylon in the sixth century BC  
Isaiah 56-66                    His ministry after the exiles returned to their land

## **Confrontation and Hope for the People of God**

### **Isaiah 1:1 to 5:30**

This section introduces the book and introduces the problem God has with his people. The people who were supposed to be a *holy nation* turned into a *sinful nation*. These first five chapters show us the depth of their sin. Judgment is deserved but the people also hear God offering them grace.



### Chapter 1 – God Confronts the Sins of Judah

Isaiah ministered during the time of four kings (refer to 2 Kings 15-20)

The heavens and earth were called into the courtroom as witnesses.

God announced the charge against his people.

At first it appeared that God was rejecting the very acts of worship required in Leviticus.

Yet God stated that he opposed their hypocrisy (not their worship).

The laws were always intended to foster true godliness.

True godliness is humility, purity of heart, and the promotion of the well-being of others.

The covenant God made with Israel after the exodus was compared to a marriage covenant.

#### *Questions:*

Name the great offenses committed by Israel (1:16-23).

What does religious hypocrisy look like today?

How does God view sin?

How does God view us when in this covenant relationship?

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### Chapter 2 to 4 – God Speaks of Judgment and Grace

The focus of these chapters is on the future of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

It is a lengthy section that announces the approaching judgment of God against the people.

Isaiah outlines more reasons that Israel will be condemned.

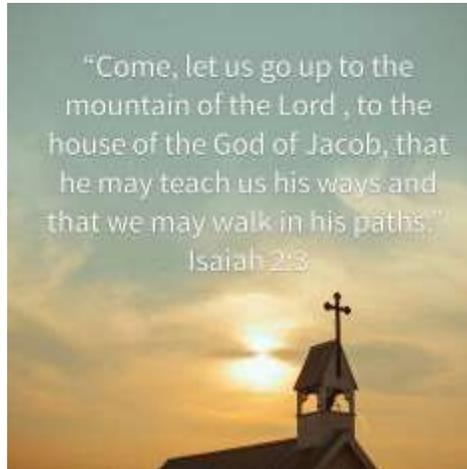
Yet God promises an entrance into grace.

*Questions:*

What more has Israel done to deserve judgment (2:5-8) (3:8-9)?

What does this section teach us about God?

What will the *branch of the Lord* do for the people of God (4:2-6)?



Chapter 5 – God Condemns the Sins of Judah

At one time Israel was a *pleasant planting* and God carefully cultivated the vineyard.

However we learn that the people failed to produce the fruit of righteousness that God expected.

They brought forth only unwanted *wild grapes*.

Isaiah outlines a cycle of six woes that allows us to see these bitter fruits.

The section ends with a terrifying scene:

God will summon the nations, including Assyria, to carry out his judgment against his people.

We see a picture of creation in reverse – a return to darkness and chaos.

We have to rely on the character and promises of God in Chapters 1-4 for the message of hope.

*Questions:*

What are the six woes that are outlined in Chapter 5 (introduced by the word *Ah*)?

Verses 8-10                      Abundant Possessions / Selfish Ambition

Verses 11-17                    Indulgence / Addiction to Pleasure

Verses 18-19                    No Reverence for God / No Fear of God

Verse 20                         Distorted Values

Verse 21                         Personal Pride

Verses 22-23                    Injustice

Is there any sign of hope (refer back to the branch of the Lord)?

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*Glimpses of the Gospel (Good News)*

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in Eden, they were sent away from his presence. As their descendants, we are all born outside of his presence and continue to rebel against him. Yet God invites us back. Even after Israel provoked God with their many sins, he still extended an invitation of grace in Isaiah 1:18-20.

### *Surprising Grace*

Throughout Isaiah 2:6-4:1 we hear what God will do *in that day*.

It is a day of utter terror for sinners (Isaiah 2:20-21).

In Isaiah 4:1 Isaiah once again uses the term – *in that day*.

Now the term is used to suggest an unexpected wave of grace.

In this instance God promises to provide the *branch of the Lord* (we interpret it as the Messiah).

The people of God will be washed clean and the presence of the Lord will be our refuge.

We are dead in our trespasses but made alive together with Christ by grace through faith.

Because Israel rejected God the faithful city is likened to a whore.

They are like a faithful city that became faithless / like a bride who abandoned her marriage.

Yet Isaiah looks to the future and speaks of a restoration of the binding relationship.

We understand it to mean she will be a faithful city and bride because of Jesus Christ.

Christ loves us and gave himself up for us on the cross.

Revelation describes the ultimate fulfillment of this promise in Revelation 21:2.

Using the metaphor of a vineyard, the song of Isaiah in Chapter 5 retells the history of Israel.

It goes from their initial planting in Canaan to their continual failing to bear righteous fruit.

Psalm 80 pleads for God to have regard for this vine.

This becomes the background to the announcement by Jesus in John 15:1 – I am the true vine.

He bore the fruit of righteousness that Israel and all of us failed to produce.

Jesus took this destruction in our place on the cross.

And now, through faith in him, we are connected to the True Vine and can bear good fruit.

### *Theological Soundings*

As a prophet who receives a vision, Isaiah is called to declare the Word of God to the world.

The book of Isaiah is unrelenting in its confrontation of sin.

From the beginning we see that the people of God have rebelled and are a *sinful nation*.

They are described as *a people laden with iniquity*.

What is worse is that they sin even after God was so faithful in caring for them as his children.

The redemption offered by God must (and does) include comprehensive cleansing and renewal.

Name one insight gained from Isaiah 1-5.

### **Assignment for September 12**

Read Isaiah 6-12