

ISAIAH: Prophet in Perilous Times

ISAIAH'S TIMES

Monday, August 3

Reading: 2 Chronicles 26-28

Isaiah 1:1 *The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...”

Thus begins Charles Dickens’ classic novel A Tale of Two Cities. These famous opening lines fit well with the days in which the prophet Isaiah ministered. The kingdom of David had been divided for almost 200 years – Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Further north, the Assyrian Empire was at its height of power and to the east Babylon, though under the control of Assyria, was beginning to build their strength and lust for power.

Isaiah’s ministry covered the reigns of four kings of Judah.

UZZIAH (2 Chronicles 26): Uzziah was a good king who ended badly. While he followed God the Lord gave him success. But at the end of his reign his pride led him to try to take the place of God’s priest and he was struck with leprosy for the rest of his days.

JOTHAM (2 Chronicles 27): Jotham learned from his father’s mistakes and “walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.” But the people still followed some of the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations.

AHAZ (2 Chronicles 28): Jotham’s son returned the nation idol worship. He even gave his own children as human sacrifices to Baal. God allowed him to suffer several defeats at the hands of his enemies, but this did not turn Ahaz’s heart. When the Assyrian king threatened him, he stripped the Temple of its riches and sent them as a bribe. It was during his reign that Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and carried them away into captivity (2 Kings 17).

HEZEKIAH (2 Chronicles 29-32): Hezekiah was nothing like his father. He was one of Judah’s greatest and godliest kings. He repaired the neglected Temple and led the people back to God.

Isaiah’s times were full of ups and downs; good kings and bad; times of spiritual light and spiritual darkness. Our times can also be called “a spring of hope” and “a winter of despair.” But like Isaiah, we must look beyond the times and boldly declare:

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; “For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2 NKJV)