

# INTRO TO ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah is a unique type of literature. We say its *genre* is prophetic; genre refers, in this case, to various types of literature that have certain characteristics. For instance, American poetry is a literary genre characterized by rhythm and rhyme. Historical narrative is a literary genre that gives factual retellings of real events.

Isaiah is Biblical prophecy which is a literary genre characterized by messages from God about the present and the future. Prophecies were directed at God's own people, but also to other kings and countries during the time of Isaiah and beyond. Some prophecies were meant for Isaiah's contemporaries, some were meant for an audience much later in the future, and some for both.

The book of Isaiah is a compilation of messages. They are not always in chronological order. When reading Isaiah, we really are reading message to message. Isaiah will not read like a story, though there is a story to it. We will be studying individual messages. I've provided a detailed outline to help you in your reading to be able to identify the individual messages or what we will also call *oracles*.

The book of Isaiah was written between 739 B.C. and 680 B.C. At this time, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into the Kingdom of Israel to the north, also called "Ephraim", with its capital in Samaria. To the south was the Kingdom of Judah, with its capital in Jerusalem. The Kingdom of Israel was larger, wealthier and stronger than the Kingdom of Judah. The two kingdoms were hostile towards one another as we will see in the book of Isaiah.

Both Kingdoms were still under the Mosaic Covenant and the Mosaic Law. The magnificent Temple of Solomon still stood in Jerusalem and was the center of Jewish worship. God's original purpose for the Nation of Israel was to reveal the existence and majesty of the one true God, Yahweh, to all the nations of the world, (Deuteronomy 4:5-6). To that end, God gave the nation of Israel His law that they might become a righteous and prosperous nation. One main provision of the law was the promise of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15). We must read the majority of the Old Testament in light of the promise of blessings and cursings. If the nation was suffering the curse of famine or the curse of invasion from its enemies, what did that indicate about their obedience or disobedience to the Law? How would they find relief from the curses? By repentance and recommitment to the Law and Covenant of Moses. You must always keep in this mind when reading the history of Israel and the messages of the Prophets.

Also, we must always keep in mind that the Law of Moses and the blessings and curses were for the Jews under the Mosaic Covenant. It is not legitimate to read the promises of blessing and cursing and apply it to the United States of America. We are not the nation of Israel. God chose the descendants of Abraham, through Jacob, to be His special people over whom He reigned in a theocracy. Though they rejected God's direct rule and established a monarchy, they remain God's chosen people. The United States is not a theocracy ruled by God. The Mosaic Covenant is no longer operative; the Church is under the New Covenant. It is important we understand these things so that we do not make illegitimate applications to the United States or to the Church.

Isaiah served during a time of great international turmoil. Assyria to the north was the dominant regional power at that time. Syria, Israel, Judah and Philistia all lived in the target area of Assyria's desire to expand its empire to the west. Chapters 1-39 focus on the Assyrian threat during the prophet Isaiah's lifetime. To the east, the Kingdom of Babylon was Assyria's chief rival eventually defeating the Assyrians in 609 B.C. By 586 B.C. the Babylonian army conquered Jerusalem and deported the majority of the surviving Jews throughout the Babylonian Empire. This was called "The Exile". In chapters 40-66, Isaiah spoke prophetically to the Jews in exile over one hundred years after his death.

The name "Isaiah" means "salvation of the Lord." There were other Jewish men named Isaiah, so the prophet identified himself seven times as "the son of Amoz," (with a "Z") not to be confused with the prophet "Amos". Isaiah was married, and his wife was called "the prophetess" (8:3), either because she was married to a prophet or because she shared the gift of prophecy. Isaiah and his wife had two sons whose names had prophetic meaning: Shear-jashub which means, "a remnant shall return" (7:3), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz means "quick to plunder, swift to the spoil"

(8:1–4, 18). These two names revealed the judgment that was to come upon Judah as well as the promise of restoration.

Isaiah was called to his ministry “in the year that King Uzziah died” (6:1), which was 739 B.C. Isaiah ministered through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who died in 686. In round numbers, Isaiah ministered for sixty years, from 740-680 BC. Isaiah was a humble man. At his commissioning to ministry, it is very clear Isaiah was aware of his sins and his need to be forgiven and cleansed (Isaiah 6:1-7). Isaiah was a brilliant communicator; the book of Isaiah is a masterpiece of sophisticated Hebrew poetry, prose and prophetic passages.

Isaiah is often referred to as "The Messianic Prophet", because of his many prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus. Yet Isaiah's work was not solely foretelling the future. A prophet of God was not primarily a future teller, but one who spoke God's word to the people of his own day. The word "prophet" literally means "to boil up like a fountain." Isaiah was a spokesman for God; not so much a "foreteller" as a "forth teller"!

Isaiah was God's spokesman to Judah and Jerusalem at a time when the nation was immersed in sin. He warned them of God's judgment against their sins, and urged them to repent. He warned them that destruction would come upon them if they did not return to God. In the midst of these warnings, Isaiah also foretold of a bright future with the coming Messiah. God would not forget His covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. He would spare a remnant of the nation of Judah out of which would come the Messiah and His Messianic kingdom.

There are numerous archaeological discoveries that verify the historicity of the people and events written about in the book of Isaiah.

Why study Isaiah?

Isaiah will lead us to contemplate the holiness, righteousness, sovereignty and grace of our great God (Isaiah 40:25-31).

Our faith in God and Jesus will be deepened by the many messianic prophecies fulfilled by the first coming of Jesus (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Our faith will be strengthened that God will fulfill His promises regarding the second coming of Jesus and the establishment of His Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4).

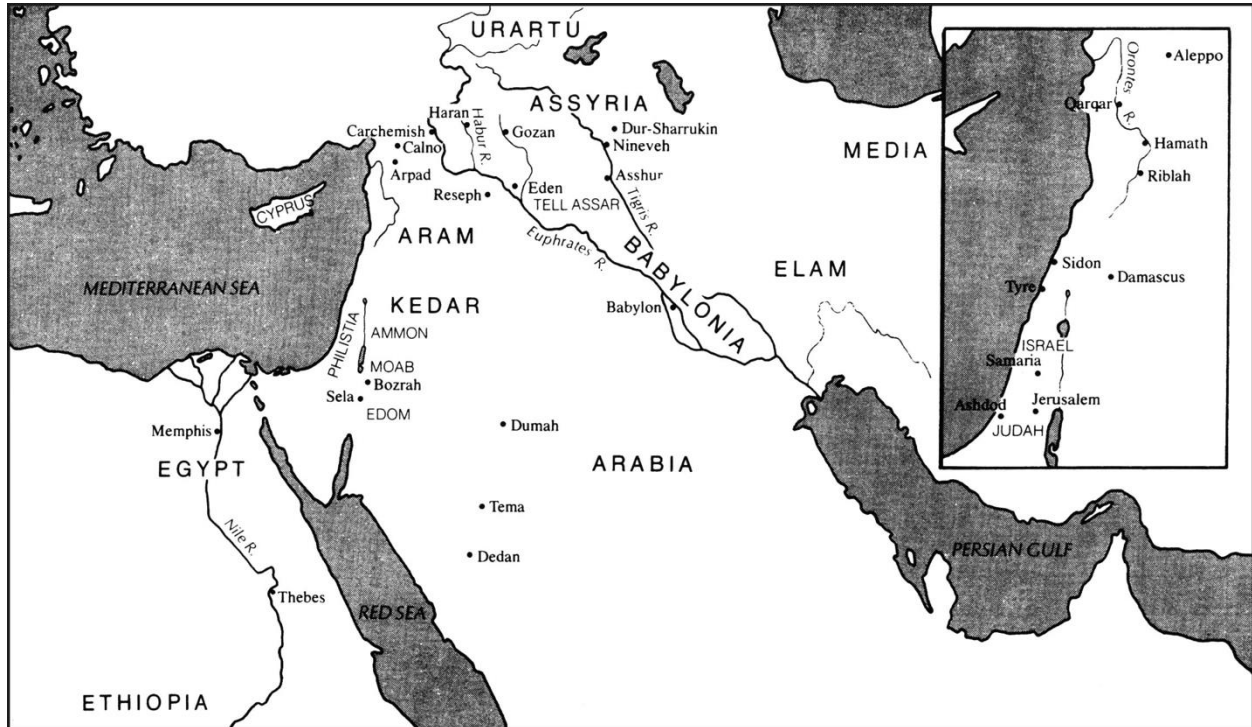
### GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

- ***Baby Dedication Informational Meeting, TODAY, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM, Modular. No signup.***
- ***Join the WELCOME TEAM! Signup today on the patio to welcome and assist those new to Grace.***
- ***If you need a HELPING HAND, fill out a yellow request in the foyer and drop into offering box in sanctuary.***
- ***Men's Breakfast, Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 AM. / Cornhole Tournament Signups / Men's Retreat Sept. 29 - Oct. 1 Signups.***
- ***Youth Parent Meeting, Sunday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, after 2<sup>nd</sup> service in the Youth Room.***
- ***Men's & Women's Bible Study Fellowship starting up soon. Check website for info (gccramona.com).***
- ***VOM Needs for August: Nerf Ball / Dental Floss / Gauze for bandages - rolls or flat.***

### THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



### ASSYRIA, BABYLON AND MEDIA IN RELATION TO ISRAEL/JUDAH



## **OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH**

By Allen Ross, Ph.D.

### **I. The Book Of Judgment (1:1—35:10)**

#### **The Message of Rebuke and Promise (1:1—6:13)**

Israel's ungrateful rebellion and the LORD's gracious invitation (1:1-31).

Israel's prospect of glory through Messiah after the chastening for sin that will make them holy (2:1—4:6).

Israel's swift and complete judgment in exile (5:1-30).

Isaiah's cleansing of unholiness and calling to the ministry to the unholy nation that faces desolation (6:1-13).

#### **The Message of Immanuel (7:1—12:6)**

The sign of the birth of Immanuel and the judgment to come by Assyria (7:1-25).

The judgment on the nation and the deliverance by the birth and reign of the Son (8:1—9:7).

The doom of Samaria for its perversion of justice (9:8—10:4).

The destruction of the pride of Assyria to Israel's satisfaction and the ushering in of Messiah's great kingdom of peace through the Branch of the root of Jesse (10:5—12:6).

#### **The Burden upon the Nations (13:1—23:18)**

Babylon will be made desolate (13:1—14:27).

Philistia will howl over its calamity (14:28-32).

Moab is lamented for her doom (15:1—16:14).

Damascus and Samaria will be plagued (17:1-14).

Ethiopia will be destroyed but left an access to God (18:1-7).

Egypt will be confounded but in the future will be part of the covenant with access (19:1—20:6).

Babylon's fall is reiterated (21:1-10).

Edom is threatened (21:11,12).

Arabia has a set time for calamity (21:13-17).

Jerusalem will be invaded (22:1-25).

Tyre will be overthrown (23:1-18).

#### **The Message of Judgment and Promise, the "Little Apocalypse" (24:1—27:13)**

Judgment for sin will fall on the land, but a remnant shall rejoice at the advancement of the kingdom (24:1-23).

Praise is offered to the LORD for His judgments and His deliverance of the believing remnant (25:1-12).

A song of rejoicing in the consolation of Judah in the time of trouble, and an exhortation to faith (26:1-21).

As with a vineyard, the LORD cares for His own and so His discipline on them differs from His judgment on the pagans: they will be preserved to worship in Jerusalem (27:1-13).

#### **Woes upon Unbelievers in Israel (28:1—33:24)**

The self-indulgent and scoffing Israel will be judged, but the remnant will advance the kingdom as it will be securely founded in the laying in Zion of the stone (28:1-29).

The blind souls of Jerusalem who deceive will be turned over to the insatiable enemies so that the nation may be sanctified for a blessing (29:1-24).

The rebuke is given for trusting in allies rather than in the LORD in the time of chastening, which is designed to bring about faith (30:1-22).

The people should turn from allies and trust in God who alone can bring down Assyria (31:1—32:20).

Judgment will fall on the enemies of Israel but there will be great privileges for the believers in Israel (33:1-24).

#### **Further Messages of Judgment and Promise (34:1—35:10)**

The destruction of Gentile power will certainly come to pass (34:1-17).

The blessing of the redeemed is to see the kingdom of peace and prosperity, physically and spiritually (35:1-10).

## **II. The Book Of Hezekiah (36:1—39:8)**

### **The Deliverance of Judah (36:1—37:38)**

The invasion of Assyria and the blasphemy of Rabshekah challenges their faith (36:1-22).

The encouragement of Isaiah in the time of mourning at the reception of the letter from Sennacherib prompts a prayer that leads to victory (37:1-38).

### **The Deliverance of Judah's King (38:1-22)**

The king's life is extended through prayer.

The king offers a song of praise for his deliverance.

### **The Deliverance of Judah into Babylon's Hands (39:1-8)**

The pride of Hezekiah displays the treasures to the king of Babylon.

The prophet announces the Babylonian captivity.

## **III. The Book Of Comfort (40:1—66:24)**

### **The Promise and Purpose of Peace (40:1—48:22)**

The prologue of the Book of Comfort announces the coming of God to Zion and the encouragement that that brings to the people (40:1-31).

The exhortation of God over the raising of the Persian deliverer, over His promises, and over the folly of idols (41:1-29).

The Servant of the LORD is raised up by the incomparable God, causing praise to Him (42:1-25).

The Servant of the LORD will be regathered because they are His people and all will see His sovereign acts (43:1—44:5).

The ability of God over idols to control history because He is the living God: the establishment of Cyrus as His shepherd and anointed servant, bringing the Gentiles into submission (44:6—45:25).

Because of the weakness of the gods of Babylon, that power will be destroyed (46:1—47:15).

Based on these prophecies, the LORD exhorts Israel to note the oracles, remember His love, and prepare to flee from the captivity (48:1-21).

### **The Prince of Peace (49:1—57:21)**

Messiah brings light and restoration: light to the Gentiles when Israel rejects; restoration to Israel at the appointed time (49:1-26).

Israel is put away over her sins, but the Servant of the LORD is obedient and by His suffering can comfort the weary (50:1-11).

Chosen Israel, the promised nation, should look in faith to the LORD for another return to the land (51:1-16).

Israel should awake because dominion will replace slavery since God has come to rule in Zion (51:17—52:12).

The Suffering Servant: blessings of redemption come to the nation and grace for the Gentiles (the next two sections) because (in this section) the Servant will be exalted from the lowly place by His death on behalf of the sins of the people as a reparation offering (52:13—53:12).

The people of God, therefore, will be blessed with redemption and dominion (54:1-17).

Grace will be extended to all (Gentile) sinners who trust in the LORD (55:1—56:8).

Among the redeemed in the kingdom, wicked leaders and corrupt idolaters will not be found (56:9—57:21).

### **The Program of Peace (58:1—66:24)**

In view of the false and ritualistic worship in his day, the prophet looks to the coming of Messiah in light and the turning of people to Him (58:1-14).

Israel, condemned for her depravity and sinfulness, will be converted by the Redeemer in Zion with the covenant through the Spirit (59:1-21).

There will be blessings of glory for Israel and access for the Gentiles—following a short period of affliction (60:1-22).

Messiah will be filled with the Spirit of the LORD to fulfill the work of redemption and deliverance in the Messianic age (61:1-11).

The prophet, wishing to see the promises of glory fulfilled, prepares and calls the people to God, who will defeat all enemies (62—63).

In response to the mercies of God for His people Israel, the nation will confess its sin, calling for a demonstration of God's power (64).

In response to the prayer of Israel, judgments will purge the rebels from Israel and prepare the remnant for the consummation of the ages with a new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem, in all its peace and prosperity (65:1-25).

The LORD God will be worshipped in sincerity and shall comfort the remnant in the great day of redemption (66:1-24).