

THE BIG READ (34)

Jesus in Isaiah

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The Old Testament that Jesus read contained the same 39 books as our English Bibles but was arranged in a different order.

It had three sections – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44)

The Law (of Moses) contains the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The second section, the Prophets, was divided into two parts:

The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) gives us God’s perspective on the history of Israel from the conquest of the Promised Land until their exile from it.

The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve) explains why the history of Israel turned out the way it did.

3. The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are sometimes referred to as the Major Prophets.

This is not because these books are more important, but simply because they are longer in length than the Minor Prophets that make up the Book of the Twelve.

B. Getting Started with Isaiah

1. Who is Isaiah?

Isaiah was a prophet who ministered in Judah during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

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

He had a wife who was a prophetess, and at least two sons.

“Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub.” (Isaiah 7:3)

“Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.” (Isaiah 8:3)

Isaiah lived and ministered when the mighty Assyrian Empire was a powerful threat to Judah and the surrounding nations.

1. The message of Isaiah is summed up in chapter 6.

The people of Judah are unclean.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5)

The people of Judah are under judgment.

"He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10)

The people of Judah are heading towards exile.

"Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken." (Isaiah 6:11-12)

The people of Judah can be forgiven through a substitutionary sacrifice.

"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." (Isaiah 6:6-7)

The people of Judah will return from exile.

"And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land." (Isaiah 6:13)

The people of Judah should trust in God alone – He is the Sovereign King of the Universe.

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on the throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:1-3)

2. Isaiah as a book breaks down into 2 sections.

Chapters 1-39: Trust in God alone or you will go into exile

Chapters 40-66: Trust in God alone and you will return from exile

3. The theme of each section of Isaiah is seen in the names of each of Isaiah's sons.

"Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion." (Isaiah 8:18)

Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means 'quick to plunder and swift to spoil'.

Shear-Jashbub means 'a remnant will return'.

4. In Isaiah 1-39, the people of Judah are told to trust in God alone or they will go into exile.

Throughout this section of Isaiah, we see that the people of Judah put their trust in the wrong things.

They put their trust in idols and false gods.

"Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made." (Isaiah 2:8)

They put their trust in themselves.

"Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates; the defences of Judah are stripped away. And you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest; you saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defences; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago." (Isaiah 22:7-11)

They put their trust in their leaders who were unfaithful.

"See now, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counsellor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter." (Isaiah 3:1-3)

"The LORD enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: "It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses." (Isaiah 3:14)

And their leaders led them to put their trust in other nations (the foolishness of this is exposed in chapters 13 to 27 where Isaiah prophesies God's judgment upon them).

Isaiah highlights two occasions when this happens.

Firstly, King Ahaz led them to put their trust in Assyria.

In response to the threat posed by Assyria, Israel and Syria (Aram) formed a defensive alliance and wanted Judah to join them.

When King Ahaz refused, Israel and Syria attacked Judah with the aim of putting a puppet king in place who would do their bidding (see Isaiah 7:1-6).

Isaiah tells King Ahaz, not to be afraid because Israel and Syria's days are numbered, and to trust God.

"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." (Isaiah 7:9)

Instead of trusting in God alone, Ahaz made a treaty with Assyria and this brought disaster to the nation.

"The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah – he will bring the king of Assyria." (Isaiah 7:17)

Ahaz trusted in other nations instead of trusting in God alone.

Secondly, King Hezekiah (who was a good king, see 2 Kings 18:3-7) led them to put their trust in Babylon.

At first Hezekiah learned from Ahaz's mistakes and rebels against Assyria, putting his trust in the Lord.

"Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God." (Isaiah 37:20)

And God miraculously delivers Jerusalem from Assyrian attack.

"Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning – there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there." (Isaiah 37:36-37)

But after a time of illness and recovery, Hezekiah made an alliance with the king of Babylon.

"At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses – the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine oil, his entire armoury and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them." (Isaiah 39:1-2)

In response to Hezekiah's actions, God says that Judah will in the future be exiled to Babylon.

"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (Isaiah 39:5-7)

Yet throughout this section, in the midst of all the warnings of judgment to Judah because of their failure to trust in God alone, there is a glimmer of hope: the King God promised will come.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD... He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth." (Isaiah 11:1-3, 12)

"So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." (Isaiah 28:16)

"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy." (Isaiah 35:5-6)

Isaiah's message to the people of Judah throughout this section is repent and trust in God alone otherwise you will be sent into exile.

5. In Isaiah 40-66, the people of Judah are told to trust in God alone and they will return from exile.

The announcement of the Babylonian exile in Isaiah 39:5-7 sets the scene for chapters 40 to 66 which is a message of hope for the people of Judah who are in exile in Babylon.

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isaiah 40:1-5)

In Isaiah 40-48, Isaiah tells the people of Judah in exile that God can be trusted to restore them to the Land.

"Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. He turns them to dust with his sword, to wind-blown chaff with his bow. He pursues them and moves on unscathed, by a path his feet have not travelled before." (Isaiah 41:2-3)

"who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." (Isaiah 44:28)

In Isaiah 49-58, Isaiah tells the people of Judah in exile that God can be trusted to save them from their sins through the Servant of the Lord who will take judgment they deserve.

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

In Isaiah 59-66, Isaiah tells the people of Judah in exile that God can be trusted to bless them with a glorious future.

“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth... The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.” (Isaiah 65:17, 25)

Isaiah’s message to the people of Judah throughout this section is repent and trust in God alone and you will return from exile.

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:22)

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” (Isaiah 55:1)

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” (Isaiah 55:6-7)

“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.” (Isaiah 66:2)

D. Jesus in Isaiah

1. Jesus is the Lord Isaiah saw.

“Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.” (John 12:41)

2. Jesus is the Servant-King.

“The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him... “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:17, 21)

Isaiah	Event
7:14	King will be born of a virgin
9:7, 11:1	King will be a descendent of David
9:1-2	King will begin His ministry in Galilee
11:2	King will be filled with the Spirit
35:5-6	King will heal the blind, deaf, and lame
40:3	King will have the way prepared for Him
50:6	Servant will be spat on and punched
52:13	Servant will be exalted
52:14	Servant will be marred through suffering
53:5	Servant will make a blood atonement
53:1, 3	Servant will be widely rejected
53:4, 5	Servant will bear our sin and sorrow
53:6, 8	Servant will be our substitute
53:7, 8	Servant will voluntarily accept our guilt and punishment
53:9	Servant will be buried in a rich man’s tomb
53:10, 11	Servant will rise from the dead
53:10, 11	Servant will save those who believe in Him
61:1	Spirit-anointed preacher of good news