

Isaiah – Introduction Part 5

Isaiah 30:8-9, 12-13, 15 – Now go, write it on a tablet before them And inscribe it on a scroll, That it may serve in the time to come As a witness forever. For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen To the instruction of the LORD; ... Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, "Since you have rejected this word And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them, Therefore this iniquity will be to you Like a breach about to fall, A bulge in a high wall, Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant, ... For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing,

REVIEW

In part 1 of our introduction, we looked at Isaiah the man.

In part 2, we looked at the intended audience. And how Isaiah has impacted Israel across the eras.

Part 3 was about the direct audience, the Nation of Israel from 800-685 BC. Then we discussed themes: judgment, holiness, the remnant, Messiah, and restoration

In part 4, we put together an outline of the book, and then we saw that Isaiah's authenticity is verified by manuscript evidence, extra-biblical testimony, and by Jesus and the apostles as they attributed every section of the book to Isaiah.

SPECIAL FEATURES

There are several features of the book that we need to point out. These topics are seen as strands that can be followed throughout the book as Isaiah weaves them together. Today, we will look at three threads:

1. The Messianic Hope
2. The Motif of the City
3. The Holy One of Israel

THE MESSIANIC HOPE

Isaiah writes about righteousness, judgment, and hope. No matter how heavy the judgment that falls, a coming individual always steps into view and gives hope. The prophet shows us one Messiah, but the portrait develops in three clear stages as the book moves along: the promised King in the early chapters, the suffering Servant in the great comfort section, and the anointed Conqueror in the final vision of everlasting glory.

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Let's start with the promised King, mostly in chapters 1 through 39. Right in the middle of a crisis with Ahaz, Isaiah points to a child whose birth is a direct sign from God Himself (Isaiah 7:14). The name given to this son means God with us, and the titles piled on him are nothing less than divine: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). His government increases without end, seated on David's throne, established with justice and righteousness forever, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts guarantees it. A little further on, we see a shoot sprouting from what looks like a cut-down stump, the line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-4). The Spirit of the Lord rests on Him fully, bringing wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. He judges the poor with righteousness and decides for the afflicted with equity. His very word strikes the earth. This is a royal authority so complete that no army is needed. Justice flows from His mouth alone.

Then the picture changes. When the book turns to comfort for God's people in chapters 40 through 55, the same figure appears as the Servant. God upholds Him, delights in Him, puts His Spirit on Him to bring justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1-4). Yet He works gently, never breaking a bruised reed or quenching a dimly burning wick. The deepest description comes in that long passage where the Servant prospers and is lifted high, yet first He is despised, rejected, and marred beyond human measure (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). He bears griefs and carries sorrows that belong to others, pierced for transgressions not His own, and crushed for iniquities committed by the people. The punishment that brings peace falls on Him. By His wounds healing comes to those who earned the wounds. He opens not His mouth, like a lamb led to slaughter. He pours out His soul to death, numbered with transgressors, bears the sin of many, and makes intercession for them. The Lord lays on Him the iniquity of all, substitution in its plainest form. The innocent stands in for the guilty so the guilty can go free.

Finally, in chapters 56 through 66, where everything moves toward everlasting glory, the Messiah steps forward as the anointed Conqueror. He wears righteousness as a breastplate and salvation as a helmet (Isaiah 59:17-20). A redeemer comes to Zion. The Spirit of the Lord rests on Him again, but now the anointing includes proclaiming both the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance (Isaiah 61:1-2). He appears coming from Edom with garments stained red, majestic in apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength (Isaiah 63:1-4). He speaks in righteousness, mighty to save, yet He treads the winepress alone. No one from the peoples stands with Him. The day of vengeance is in His heart.

See what ties these three portraits together. It is one person throughout. The Child born in weakness becomes the Servant who suffers in weakness and then the Conqueror who triumphs in strength. The suffering is not a mistake or a side path. It is the required road to the throne. Justice must be satisfied before peace can reign. The King cannot simply overlook sin. Someone has to bear it. The Servant does exactly that. Only then can the Conqueror return and complete the victory. Isaiah sees both coming pressed together because the interval between them was hidden from him. We stand on the other side of the cross and resurrection, so we can separate the peaks and recognize the valley plainly. But the prophet's

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message stands firm: one Messiah, three necessary stages of the same mission. He rules as King because He first atoned as Servant and will finally conquer as Warrior. Take away any stage, and the hope falls apart. Keep all three, and the hope stands forever.

THE MOTIF OF THE CITY

Isaiah keeps coming back to one place more than any other prophet does. He mentions the city over a hundred times, and he calls her by a whole cluster of names that all circle around the same reality. This is the spot where God chooses to dwell with His people.

Some of the names and titles:

- Jerusalem (more than 60 times)
- Zion (more than 45 times)
- Daughter of Zion / Daughter of Jerusalem (the people personified)
- The Mountain of the LORD / The Mountain of the House of the LORD (Isaiah 2:2-3)
- The Holy Mountain (Isaiah 11:9, 56:7, 65:11, 25, 66:20)
- Ariel (lion of God or altar hearth, Isaiah 29:1-2, 7)
- The City of the LORD / City of Righteousness / Faithful City (Isaiah 1:26, 60:14)
- Mount Zion (Isaiah 4:5, 8:18, 10:12, 18:7, 24:23, 29:8)

The city feels the weight of judgment because she has turned from faithfulness. Isaiah describes how the once faithful city has become a harlot, full of justice no longer, righteousness no longer lodging there, now filled with murderers instead (Isaiah 1:21). Her gates lament and mourn. Deserted, she sits on the ground in shame (Isaiah 3:26). Pride, idolatry, and injustice have made her unclean, and the Lord cannot let that stand.

Yet the same city is defended and promised cleansing. The Lord spreads a canopy of cloud by day and fire by night over Mount Zion, a covering of glory that shelters every assembly there (Isaiah 4:5-6). He refuses to keep silent for Zion's sake. He gives her a new name. No longer Forsaken or Desolate, but My Delight Is in Her and Married (Isaiah 62:1-4). In the end, she becomes a mother who nurses and satisfies, comforting her children the way a mother comforts, and the Lord Himself promises comfort in Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:10, 12-13).

More than that, the city becomes the center that draws every nation. In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord stands chief above the hills, and peoples stream to it saying, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord that He may teach us His ways and we may walk in His paths (Isaiah 2:2-3). The law goes out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

What Isaiah wants us to see is bigger than geography. The city stands for the covenant people gathered around the presence of God. When she falls, it shows what breaking a covenant

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costs. When she rises cleansed and glorified, it shows God's unbreakable purpose. He will not abandon the place He has chosen for His name's sake. The nations coming up to learn His ways tells us the story does not end with Israel alone. The city's restoration means blessing flowing out to the whole earth, exactly what God promised Abraham long before (Hebrews 11:8-10). Her future glory is the sign that the Holy One has kept His word, and the Messianic King will reign from there forever.

THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

Isaiah uses this title more than any other writer in Scripture. He uses "the Holy One of Israel" 25 times—twelve times in the opening chapters through 39, thirteen times in the comfort and glory section from 40 to 66. No one else even comes close.

The Hebrew behind it is קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל (qadosh yisra'el). The word קָדוֹשׁ (qadosh) carries the idea of being set apart, distinct, morally pure. When it describes God, it points to absolute otherness. He stands completely above creation, above the nations and their so-called gods. Nothing impure can stand in His presence without consequence.

What makes the title powerful is the way it joins two truths that seem to pull in opposite directions. On one side, you have God's blazing holiness that demands judgment on sin. On the other side, you have his stubborn covenant loyalty to this particular people, Israel. Even when they rebel, He still calls them His own.

Look at how the title works in the first half of the book. It often stands right in the middle of judgment. The people reject the law of the Lord of hosts and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 5:24). They tell the prophets to get out of the way and stop talking about the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 30:11-13). His holiness means He exalts Himself in judgment and shows Himself holy in righteousness (Isaiah 5:16). Sin cannot stay hidden or unpunished when the Holy One is on the throne.

Then the book turns to comfort, and the same title now stands in promises of redemption. The Lord declares Himself their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, who sends to Babylon for their sake and calls Himself their Creator and King (Isaiah 43:14-15). He teaches them to profit and leads them in the way they should go (Isaiah 48:17). He redeems them as the Holy One, jealous for His own name, unwilling to let it be profaned forever (Isaiah 48:11). He calls Himself their Savior and Husband, the God of the whole earth (Isaiah 54:5). Even though His holiness required exile, that same holiness guarantees He will act to buy them back.

What kind of portrait do we get of His character and actions across the book? He is the sovereign Creator who stretches out the heavens alone and calls the stars by name (Isaiah 40:25-26). He raises up nations and brings them down for His purpose. He judges sin with perfect righteousness, yet He redeems with covenant faithfulness. He stoops to live with the

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contrite and lowly in spirit (Isaiah 57:15). In the end, He makes His dwelling on the holy mountain with a people He has made holy (Isaiah 66:20).

This title carries the whole weight and tension of Isaiah. A God so holy that rebellion brings certain exile and ruin. Yet a God so bound to Israel by His own promise that He Himself will step in and make her holy. The Messiah, the city's restoration, the final glory, all of it flows from the character of the Holy One of Israel. He cannot leave sin unjudged, but He will not leave His people unforgiven. His holiness is both the reason for the lawsuit and the guarantee of the happy ending.

CONCLUSION

These three threads (Messianic Hope, the City, and the Holy One of Israel) are not separate topics that Isaiah treats in different sections. They appear together on almost every page.

- The Holy One of Israel must judge sin.
- The city of Jerusalem/Zion bears the brunt of that judgment yet remains the focal point of His redeeming purpose.
- The Messianic Hope is the only way the Holy One can both satisfy justice and restore the city and the nation.