

# Isaiah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Isaiah was the most cultured and sophisticated of all the prophets. He played the role of an ambassador, had access to the royal court, and was an advisor to four different kings of Judah. Yet this prophet is best known as the Prophet of the Redeemer for his many vivid descriptions of the coming Messiah. No other prophet speaks as frequently and clearly about the coming King, Servant, and Conqueror. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the life and words of the prophet Isaiah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the difference between the major and minor prophets.
2. To describe the life and mission of the prophet Isaiah.
3. To identify the messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah.

## QUOTATIONS

*There is a grandeur about Isaiah not found elsewhere—even in the most majestic of the rest of Scripture; a majesty full of glory and of solemnity, plain alike in the revelation vouchsafed to him and the language in which he was inspired to express it. But with the grandeur went a stern resoluteness, that if the glory does not win us to the life of obedience, if visions of the coming King, the sin-bearing Servant and the liberating*

*Anointed Conqueror will not suffice, then maybe the unmistakably horrible rewards of disobedience will drive our wayward hearts to tremble at the word of the Lord.*

—J. Alec Motyer

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The canonical prophets are those prophets whose writings are included in the canon of Scripture.
- B. The Old Testament includes the writings of the major prophets and the minor prophets.
  1. The books of the major prophets are longer than those of the minor prophets.
  2. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel comprise the major prophets and all the other prophetic books comprise the minor prophets.
- C. Most of the prophets ministered during the eighth and seventh centuries BC.
  - The judgment of God was imminent upon the people during these centuries.
- D. Isaiah was the most cultured and sophisticated of all the prophets.
  1. Isaiah played the role of an ambassador, had access to the royal court, and was an advisor to four different kings of Judah.
  2. Isaiah received his call to the prophetic office in approximately 740 BC, which is the same year that the city of Rome was probably founded.
- E. Isaiah is commissioned in the sixth chapter of his book.
- F. “And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed’” (Isa. 6:9–10).
- G. Isaiah is given the mission to speak the truth, but he is told at the beginning of his ministry that the people will not listen and the nation will be destroyed.
- H. “Then I said, ‘How long, O LORD?’ And he said: ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land’” (Isa. 6:11–12).
  1. Isaiah is called to pronounce judgment on the people, but his book is full of hope and promises of restoration for the people of God.

2. God promises to preserve a remnant or holy seed to partake of His redemption.
  3. Isaiah is best known as the Prophet of the Redeemer.
  4. Isaiah is the most frequently quoted prophet.
  5. The Messiah is most clearly pictured in the book of Isaiah.
- I. Isaiah gives King Ahaz the opportunity to receive a sign from the Lord, but the King refuses.
1. The Lord gives a sign anyway (Isa. 7:10–14).
  2. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).
- J. Isaiah gives another messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:2.
1. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”
  2. Into a climate of doom God brings light and hope.
  3. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (Isa. 9:6–7).
  4. During a time of national crisis and defeat the Lord promises to raise up a son of David to establish universal, lasting peace.
- K. Isaiah also prophesies of the Messiah in 11:1–5.
1. The Messiah will reign in righteousness and equity.
  2. The son of David to come will uproot the wicked and restore justice.
  3. The results of the Messiah’s reign are found in 11:6–9.
  4. This passage is written in poetic language yet forecasts the cosmic deliverance of His people and the entire earth.

5. This cosmic redemption will be accomplished by the one who is to come in justice.
- L. The grand redemption accomplished by the Messiah is described in Isaiah 61.
1. Jesus retired to the wilderness to prepare for His mission and ministry.
  2. He returned and entered the synagogue and read the text from Isaiah 61.
  3. Rabbis sat down to teach. After Jesus read the text he sat down and said, “This day these words are fulfilled in your midst” (Luke 4:21).
  4. “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me” (Isa. 61:1a).
  5. The word *Messiah* means “Anointed One” and translated into Greek the word becomes *Christos* or, “the Christ.”
  6. Isaiah promises healing for the brokenhearted, liberation for the captives, and a restoration of the ruins.
  7. God is not finished with Jerusalem and promises its restoration.
  8. When John the Baptist asks Jesus if He is the Messiah, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 to highlight the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- M. Isaiah 53 prophecies the central work of the Messiah.
1. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4–5).
  2. Isaiah provides an almost eyewitness account of the crucifixion.
  3. This prophecy of the servant who will bear the sins of His people, was fulfilled in every detail by Christ.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the difference between the major prophets and the minor prophets? Who are the four major prophets whose writings are contained in the Bible?
2. During what centuries did most of the canonical prophets minister?

3. Isaiah is perhaps the most well known of all the canonical prophets. What kind of message was he called to preach to the people of Judah (Isa. 6:9–12)? What were the prospects for its success among the people?
4. Fill in the blanks: Isaiah is best known as the Prophet of the \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ is most clearly pictured in Isaiah.
5. What hope does Isaiah give throughout his book, even as he is prophesying judgment (Isa. 10:20)?
6. Dr. Sproul discusses the messianic prophecies found in Isaiah 7:10–14; 9:1–7; and 11. What do these words from the prophet tell us about the Messiah and His ministry?
7. Which portion of the book of Isaiah does Jesus read at the beginning of His ministry in Luke 4:16–21? Describe the scope of God’s redemptive purpose in the chapter that Jesus reads from in Isaiah.
8. Where do we find the prophecy of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah? How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy (see 1 Peter 2:21–25)?

## DISCUSSION

1. According to Isaiah, the entire nation was to suffer the effects of God’s judgment, with even the righteous people enduring some of the tribulation because they lived among the others. Should they have expected to escape suffering? Should we expect to escape suffering? What hope do we cling to as we suffer for the Lord’s sake?
2. What steps can we take to better understand the poetic imagery that is found throughout the prophetic books?
3. Isaiah 65:17–25 describes the new heavens and earth that will mark the consummation of God’s salvation. What are you most looking forward to in this coming eternal state?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*

Sproul, R.C. *The Holiness of God*, pp. 22–48