

Isaiah and Ezekiel

02 Isaiah—the Man and His Message

Before we dive into the text of Isaiah 1–12 it will be helpful for us to consider the life and times of the human author of this book. Remember that it is as we give attention to the text and reflect on it as it is written (with its language, historical setting, and structure) that the Lord will help us understand it.

1. Isaiah was a princely prophet.

- 1.1. While Jeremiah and Ezekiel have priestly connections, Isaiah's lineage places him among Judah's royal nobility.
- 1.2. Jewish authorities interpreted the Amoz of Isaiah 1:1 to be the brother of King Amaziah who reigned over Judah from 796–790 BC (Talmud Megillah 10b:14).
- 1.3. That would make Amoz King Uzziah's uncle and Isaiah Uzziah's cousin.
- 1.4. In the book of Immanuel (Isa 7–12), we saw Isaiah interacting with royal figures, and this tradition would make sense of that phenomenon: Isaiah had access to the royal court because he was a member of Judah's high nobility.
- 1.5. This sets the context for what Isaiah was called to do. The naming of Isaiah's children and the public sign acts he was called to perform took place in the public sphere. Isaiah's activity was national news and (as unpleasant as it was) hard to ignore.

2. Isaiah was a submissive servant.

- 2.1. Isaiah's calling (Isaiah 6) is one of the most striking features of the book. It reminds us that even when God chooses to use those who are of noble birth, he does not do so *because*

of their noble birth. In Yahweh's presence, he alone sits on the "high and lofty throne" (6:1).

- 2.2. Isaiah is not only not high and lifted up; he is also not holy enough to serve as God's messenger by right or merit. What lifts Yahweh up far above his creatures is his thrice holiness. In the face of such absolute transcendent purity and majesty, Isaiah understands the depth of his uncleanness (6:5).
- 2.3. Having seen the glory of the Lord, Isaiah submits to the Lord's difficult call: preach until the land is desolate, for the people will not listen (6:9-13).
- 2.4. Part of this difficult call was the humiliation of some of the sign gifts. For example, for three years of his ministry, Isaiah went about "stripped and barefoot" as a sign against Egypt and Cush that they would not be able to stand against Assyria but would be humiliated as captives before their armies. While this is probably not complete nakedness (cf. Job 22:6), the point was to show humiliation, and Isaiah, a man of noble birth, submitted to it without complaint. It seems that Judah of the time withdrew its trust in Egypt in response, so, as one commentator says, "Isaiah's discomfort and humiliation were the price of his people's safety" (Kidner, 1994: 645).
- 2.5. Watch for threads of loftiness, humility, faithful service, and ultimate fruitfulness woven throughout the book.

3. Isaiah's call is to trust Yahweh who saves and not the nations.

- 3.1. **Isaiah 1-39:** Isaiah's message to his people is: Trust Yahweh because he triumphs for his people over all unbelief and competition. In these chapters, Isaiah shows that Yahweh will judge the nations that vie for Judah's fear and trust, but he will save those who trust in him through a promised

Davidic deliverer. The **Assyrian** empire is in the background of all of these chapters.

- 3.1.1. **1–6:** Introduction: Judah abandons Yahweh and is doomed to exile, but a remnant shall return.
- 3.1.2. **7–12:** Despite unbelief, a Davidic deliverer will overturn the darkness and bring everlasting peace.
- 3.1.3. **13–27:** The nations—including Israel and Judah—will experience judgment from the Holy One.
- 3.1.4. **28–39:** Trusting Yahweh leads to ultimate deliverance; unbelief leads to destruction.
 - 3.1.4.1. **28–35:** In principle and prophecy, God triumphs over unbelief for the sake of his people.
 - 3.1.4.2. **36–39:** In practice, God triumphs over unbelief for the sake of his people.

3.2. **Isaiah 40–66:** Isaiah's message to his people is: Trust Yahweh, the true God, because he atones for and glorifies his people. The suffering servant is sent to represent and to redeem Judah and to become a light for the Gentiles. The **Babylonian** empire is in the background of all these chapters.

- 3.2.1. **40–48:** Yahweh incomparably excels and defeats all pretenders to his title of God.
- 3.2.2. **49–57:** Yahweh sends his suffering servant to secure redemption for Israel and the nations.
- 3.2.3. **58–66:** Yahweh promises unending glory for believers and shame for rebels.

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03 Isaiah 1–12

What ties these two subsections of Isaiah together is the focus on Judah and her future. In the immediate future, her distrust of God and reliance on her pagan neighbors is going to result in massive disappointment: judgment is on the way for both the nation and her neighbors. However, Yahweh is going to send a Davidic king, born of a virgin, and he will usher in an era of peace with Jerusalem as the global capital.

1. Isaiah 1–6: Introduction—Judah abandons Yahweh and is doomed to exile, but a remnant shall return.

- 1.1. Isaiah 1: Judah has become like Sodom and Gomorrah, but Yahweh will smelt away the dross.
- 1.2. Isaiah 2: Yahweh will make Zion the capital of a renewed world after purging pride.
- 1.3. Isaiah 3:1–4:1: Yahweh will humble the arrogant people who are in Zion.
- 1.4. Isaiah 4:2–6: The Branch of Yahweh, the humble city of Zion, will be beautiful.
- 1.5. Isaiah 5: Song of the Vineyard—The owner looked for fruit and found bloodshed; therefore, six woes shall come.
- 1.6. Isaiah 6: The Seventh Woe—Yahweh reveals his glory, cleanses his servant by fire, and commissions him.

2. Isaiah 7–12: Despite unbelief, a Davidic deliverer will overturn the darkness and bring everlasting peace.

- 2.1. Isaiah 7:1–17: Both Ahaz and his enemies will be defeated by Assyria, but hope remains.

- 2.2. Isaiah 7:18–8:22: Believers find a sanctuary in Yahweh, but to rejecters he is a snare.
- 2.3. Isaiah 9:1–7: Yahweh will exalt and enlighten the humbled and darkened land of Galilee.
- 2.4. Isaiah 9:8–10:4: Self-sufficiency leads to internal upheaval in every realm of society.
- 2.5. Isaiah 10:5–34: Assyria will act as an instrument of God's wrath and then its recipient.
- 2.6. Isaiah 11–12: After the Davidic Branch springs up and regathers the nation, they will sing.