

## Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

### Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Book Overview & Chapter 1

11/20/13

#### Isaiah Book Overview

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Isaiah	
served as a prophet to Judah from 740-681 B.C.	
<i>Climate of the times</i>	Society was in a great upheaval. Under King Ahaz and King Manasseh, the people reverted to idolatry, and there was even child sacrifice.
<i>Main message</i>	Although judgment from other nations was inevitable, the people could still have a special relationship with God.
<i>Importance of message</i>	Sometimes we must suffer judgment and discipline before we are restored to God.
<i>Contemporary prophets</i>	Hosea (753-715 B.C.), Micah (742-687 B.C.)

#### VITAL STATISTICS

<b>Purpose:</b>	To call the nation of Judah back to God and to tell of God's salvation through the Messiah
<b>Author:</b>	The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz
<b>Date Written:</b>	The events of chapters 1–39 occurred during Isaiah's ministry, so they were probably written about 700 B.C. Chapters 40–66, however, may have been written near the end of his life, about 681 B.C.
<b>Setting:</b>	Isaiah is speaking and writing mainly in Jerusalem
<b>Key Verse:</b>	"But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" (53:5).
<b>Key People:</b>	Isaiah; his two sons, Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz
<b>Special Features:</b>	The book of Isaiah contains both prose and poetry and uses personification (attributing personal qualities to divine beings or inanimate objects). Also, many of the prophecies in Isaiah contain predictions that foretell a soon-to-occur event and a distant future event at the same time.

Slowly he rose, and the crowd fell silent. Those at the back leaned forward, straining to hear. The atmosphere was electric. He spoke, and his carefully chosen words flew like swift arrows and found their mark. The great man, a spokesman for God, was warning—and condemning. The crowd became restless—shifting positions, clenching fists, and murmuring. Some agreed with his message, nodding their heads and weeping softly. But most were angry, and they began to shout back insults and threats. Such was the life of a prophet.

The “office” of prophet was instituted during the days of Samuel, the last of the judges. Prophets stood with the priests as God’s special representatives. The prophet’s role was to speak for God, confronting the people and their leaders with God’s commands and promises. Because of this confrontational stance and the continuing tendency of people to disobey God, true prophets usually were not very popular. But though their message often went unheeded, they faithfully and forcefully proclaimed the truth.

The book of Isaiah is the first of the writings of the prophets in the Bible; and Isaiah, the author, is generally considered to be the greatest prophet. He was probably reared in an aristocratic home and was married to a prophet. In the beginning of his ministry he was well liked. But, like most prophets, he soon became unpopular because his messages were so difficult to hear. He called the people to turn from their lives of sin and warned them of God’s judgment and punishment. Isaiah had an active ministry for 60 years before he was executed during Manasseh’s reign (according to tradition). As God’s special messenger to Judah, Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of several of its rulers. Many of those messages are recorded in his book: Uzziah and Jotham, chapters 1–6; Ahaz, chapters 7–14; and Hezekiah, chapters 15–39.

The first half of the book of Isaiah (chapters 1–39) contains scathing denunciations and pronouncements as he calls Judah, Israel, and the surrounding nations to repent of their sins. However, the last 27 chapters (40–66) are filled with consolation and hope as Isaiah unfolds God’s promise of future blessings through his Messiah.

As you read Isaiah, imagine this strong and courageous man of God, fearlessly proclaiming God’s word, and listen to his message in relation to your own life—*return, repent, and be renewed*. Then trust in God’s *redemption* through Christ and *rejoice*. Your Savior has come, and he’s coming again!

## THE BLUEPRINT

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### A. WORDS OF JUDGMENT (1:1–39:8)

1. The sins of Israel and Judah
2. Judgment against heathen nations
3. God’s purpose in judgment
4. Jerusalem’s true and false hopes
5. Events during the reign of Hezekiah

The 39 chapters in the first half of Isaiah generally carry the message of judgment for sin. Isaiah brings the message of judgment to Judah, Israel, and the surrounding pagan nations. The people of Judah had a form of godliness, but in their hearts they were corrupt. Isaiah’s warnings were intended to purify the people by helping them understand God’s true nature and message. However, they ignored the repeated warnings that Isaiah brought. We need to heed the prophetic voice and not repeat their error.

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### B. WORDS OF COMFORT (40:1–66:24)

1. Israel’s release from captivity
2. The future Redeemer
3. The future kingdom

The 27 chapters in the second half of Isaiah generally bring a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope. This message of hope looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah speaks more about the Messiah than does any other Old Testament prophet. He describes the Messiah as both a suffering Servant and a sovereign Lord. The fact that the Messiah was to be both a suffering Servant and a sovereign Lord could not be understood clearly until New Testament times. Based on what Jesus Christ has done, God freely offers forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith. This is God’s message of comfort to us because those who heed it find eternal peace and fellowship with him.

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## MEGATHEMES

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THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
Holiness	God is highly exalted above all his creatures. His moral perfection stands in contrast to evil people and nations. God is perfect and sinless in all his motives and actions, so he is in perfect control of his power, judgment, love, and mercy. His holy nature is our yardstick for morality.	Because God is without sin, he alone can help us with our sin. It is only right that we regard him as supreme in power and moral perfection. We must never treat God as common or ordinary. He alone deserves our devotion and praise. He is always truthful, fair, and just.
Punishment	Because God is holy, he requires his people to treat others justly. He promised to punish Israel, Judah, and other nations for faithless immorality and idolatry. True faith had degenerated into national pride and empty religious rituals.	We must trust in God alone and fulfill his commands. We cannot forsake justice nor give in to selfishness. If we harden our heart against his message, punishment will surely come to us.
Salvation	Because God's judgment is coming, we need a Savior. No man or nation can be saved without God's help. Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins is foretold and portrayed in Isaiah. All who trust God can be freed from their sin and restored to him.	Christ died to save us from our sin. We cannot save ourselves. He is willing to save all those who turn from their sin and come to him. Salvation is from God alone. No amount of good works can earn it.
Messiah	God will send the Messiah to save his people. He will set up his own Kingdom as the faithful Prince of Peace, who rules with righteousness. He will come as sovereign Lord, but he will do so as a servant who will die to take away sins.	Our trust must be in the Messiah, not in ourselves or in any nation or power. There is no hope unless we believe in him. Trust Christ fully and let him rule in your life as your sovereign Lord.
Hope	God promises comfort, deliverance, and restoration in his future Kingdom. The Messiah will rule over his faithful followers in the age to come. Hope is possible because Christ is coming.	We can be refreshed because there is compassion for those who repent. No matter how bleak our situation or how evil the world is, we must continue to be God's faithful people who hope for his return.

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# The Sins of Israel & Judah – Chapter 1

## *A Message for Rebellious Judah – Verses 1-20*

<sup>1</sup>The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. <sup>2</sup> Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. <sup>3</sup> The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." <sup>4</sup> Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. <sup>5</sup> Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. <sup>6</sup> From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with olive oil. <sup>7</sup> Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. <sup>8</sup> Daughter Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city under siege. <sup>9</sup> Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.

<sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! <sup>11</sup> "The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. <sup>12</sup> When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? <sup>13</sup> Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. <sup>14</sup> Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. <sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

<sup>16</sup> Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. <sup>17</sup> Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. <sup>18</sup> "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. <sup>19</sup> If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; <sup>20</sup> but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

### ISAIAH 1:1

Isaiah was a prophet during the time when the original nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms—Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The northern kingdom had sinned greatly against God, and the southern kingdom was headed in the same direction—perverting justice, oppressing the poor, turning from God to idols, and looking for military aid from pagan nations rather than from God. Isaiah came primarily as a prophet to Judah, but his message was also for the northern kingdom. Sometimes "Israel" refers to both kingdoms. Isaiah lived to see the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. Thus, his ministry began with warning the northern kingdom.

#### ISAIAH 1:2-4

Here "Israel" means the southern kingdom, Judah. The people of Judah were sinning greatly and had turned against God. God brought charges against them through Isaiah because they had rebelled and had forsaken the Lord. By these acts, they had broken their moral and spiritual covenant with God (see Deuteronomy 28). By breaking their agreement, they were bringing God's punishment upon themselves. First God gave them prosperity, but they didn't serve him. Then God sent them warnings, but they refused to listen. Finally, he would bring the fire of his judgment.

#### ISAIAH 1:4-9

As long as the people of Judah continued to sin, they cut themselves off from God's help and isolated themselves. When you feel lonely and separated from God, remember that God does not abandon you. Our sins cut us off from him. The only sure cure for this kind of loneliness is to restore a meaningful relationship with God by confessing your sins, obeying his instructions, and communicating regularly with him (see Psalm 140:13; Isaiah 1:16-19; 1 John 1:9).

#### ISAIAH 1:7

Was this destruction taking place at that time? Judah was attacked many times during Isaiah's lifetime. To be plundered by foreigners was the worst kind of judgment. This verse could be a picture of the results of these invasions or a prediction of the coming invasion of Israel by Assyria. But most likely it pointed to Babylon's future invasion of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. as well.

#### ISAIAH 1:9-10

Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities that God completely destroyed for their great wickedness (Genesis 19:1-25). They are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible as examples of God's judgment against sin (Jeremiah 50:40; Ezekiel 16:46-63; Matthew 11:23, 24; Jude 1:7). Some survivors from Judah were spared by God because they were faithful.

Isaiah compared the rulers and people of Judah to the rulers and people of Sodom and Gomorrah. To hear what God wanted to say, the people had to listen and be willing to obey. When we can't hear God's message, perhaps we are not listening carefully, or we are not truly willing to do what he says.

#### ISAIAH 1:10-14

God was unhappy with their sacrifices, but he was not revoking the system of sacrifices he had initiated with Moses. Instead, God was calling for sincere faith and devotion. The leaders were carefully making the traditional sacrifices and offerings at holy celebrations, but they were still unfaithful to God in their hearts. Sacrifices were to be an outward sign of their faith in God, but the outward signs became empty because no faith existed. Why, then, did they continue to offer sacrifices? Like many people today, they had come to place more faith in the rituals of their religion than in the God they worshiped. Examine your own religious practices: Do they spring from your faith in the living God? God does not take pleasure in our outward expressions if our inward faith is missing (see Deuteronomy 10:12-16; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; Psalm 51:16-19; Hosea 6:6).

#### ISAIAH 1:13

New moon celebrations and Sabbaths refer to monthly offerings (Numbers 28:11-14) and weekly and special annual Sabbaths on the Day of Atonement and Festival of Shelters (Leviticus 16:31, 23-34). For all the festivals, see the chart "The Festivals." Although the people did not feel sorry for their sins, they continued to offer sacrifices for forgiveness. Gifts and sacrifices mean nothing to God when they come from someone with a corrupt heart. God wants us to love him, trust him, and turn from our sin; after that, he will be pleased with our "sacrifices" of time, money, or service.

ISAIAH 1:18 Crimson was the color of a deep-red permanent dye, and its deep stain was virtually impossible to remove from clothing. The bloodstained hands of the murderers are probably in view here (see 1:15, 21). The stain of sin seems equally permanent, but God can remove sin's stain from our life as he promised to do for the Israelites. We don't have to go through life permanently soiled. God's Word assures us that if we are willing and obedient, Christ will forgive and remove our most indelible stains (Psalm 51:1-7).

### *Unfaithful Jerusalem – Verses 21-31*

<sup>21</sup> See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her— but now murderers! <sup>22</sup> Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water. <sup>23</sup> Your rulers are rebels, partners with thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. <sup>25</sup> I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. <sup>26</sup> I will restore your leaders as in days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City." <sup>27</sup> Zion will be delivered with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness. <sup>28</sup> But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the LORD will perish. <sup>29</sup> "You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen. <sup>30</sup> You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water. <sup>31</sup> The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire."

### ISAIAH 1:21, 22

Jerusalem here represents all of Judah. God compares the actions of his people to a prostitute. The people had turned from the worship of the true God to worshiping idols. Their faith was worthless, impure, and diluted. Idolatry, outward or inward, is spiritual adultery, breaking our commitment to God in order to love something else. Jesus described the people of his day as adulterous, even though they were religiously strict. As the church, we are the "bride" of Christ (Revelation 19:7), and, by faith, we can be clothed in his righteousness. Has your faith become impure? Ask God to restore you. Keep your devotion to him strong and pure.

### ISAIAH 1:25

God promised to refine his people similar to the way that metal is purged with lye in a smelting pot. This process involves melting the metal and skimming off the impure dross until the worker can see his own image in the liquid metal. We must be willing to submit to God, allowing him to remove our sin so that we might reflect his image.

### ISAIAH 1:29, 30

Throughout history, the oak tree has been a symbol of strength, but the people were worshiping "sacred oaks." Ezekiel mentions that groves of oak trees were used as places for idol worship (Ezekiel 6:13). Are you devoted to symbols of strength and power that rival God's place in your life? Does your commitment to any of your interests border on worship? Make God your first loyalty; everything else will fade in time and burn away under his scrutiny.

### ISAIAH 1:31

A spark set to tinder ignites a quick, devouring fire. God compares the evil deeds of powerful people to a roaring fire that will devour them. Our life can be destroyed quickly by a small but deadly spark of evil. What potential "fire hazards" do you need to remove?