

Lessons from Old Testament Biblical History and Characters – Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah is the first of 17 prophetic books in the Old Testament. The reason for that placement is uncertain – it is not the first written or the longest. Perhaps it is the most comprehensive? New Testament quotations and references to the book show its significance (cp. Luke 4:17-19; Matthew 15:8). The Book of Isaiah contains many well known and beloved passages (examples: 1:18; 7:14; 9:6-7; 26:3-4; 41:10; 40:31; 53).

Pastorally I think: *what would be helpful for us to know? What would enhance or reading of book and its ministry to our thinking and Christian life?* I want to encourage you to know the basic **history** of the people to whom Isaiah ministered and understand his words in that **context**. Then, take the message and see truth that you can **apply** to your life. Highlight things you want to remember, enabling you to quickly return to those truths.

1. Isaiah's ministry spanned the reigns of several Judean kings and about 60 years of time. Isaiah 1:1. His name means; **Yahweh Saves** or Yahweh is Salvation. Isaiah's writing would have a message to the Northern Kingdom and its pending exile and then the historic destruction at the hands of Assyria. Isaiah's **warning** to Judah would be to repent, lest the same thing happen to them.
2. The book can be divided into two sections. In chapters 1-39 the prophetic language (over 80% of the book) is interwoven with historical **events** and **people**. Chapters 40-66 are focused on the **future**. Chapters 1-39 declare God's **judgment**, 40-66 God's **forgiveness, deliverance**, and hope. Chapters 1-39 warn those contemporary with Isaiah, while chapters 40-66 would have special significance to Judah in **exile**, though it happens after the passing of Isaiah.
3. Isaiah's "**vision**", 1:1, includes many **predictive** or future prophecies – including **Messianic** prophecies. It is important to understand the "**prophetic vision**." The revelation given to the prophet would often see two or more events separated by time, as one or happening at the same time.
 - Isaiah 7:10ff – a sign was given to Ahaz, but that sign is also of Jesus. Sometimes this is referred to as **double-fulfillment**.
 - Messianic prophecies reveal that the Messiah will come as a **child** (cp. 7:14; 9:6), reign as **King** (cp. 11:1-10), and be a suffering **Servant** (cp. 52:13 – 53:12). The prophet sees them all as one, without the time in-between.
4. Other Messianic prophecies involve figures of speech that find their meaning in the revelation of the New Testament.
 - **Branch**, 11:1; cp. Hebrews 7:14
 - **Stone**, 28:16-17; cp. 1 Peter 2:6; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20;
 - **Light**, 42:6-8; 49:6; 60:1-3, 20; cp. Luke 1:79, 2:32;
5. Prophecies about the Persian king **Cyrus**, 44:28; 45:1.
 - Show God's **sovereign** use of even the unsaved to do His will.
 - Have cause biblical critics to wrongly declare that chapters 40-66 were written after the Exile.
6. The flow of the message follows a similar pattern to other prophets and prophetic books.
 - The people **sinned** (more below) and **refused to repent**, 24:5; 42:24; 50:1, 59:1-2; 65:12; 66:3-4.
 - Lack of repentance would lead to definite judgment, cp. 1:20, 25, 28; 5:13;
 - God would bring salvation, forgiveness, cp. 1:18; 38:17, and eventual restoration for a **remnant**.

7. In Isaiah 6:1-12, we see Isaiah's profound sense of **personal sinfulness** in the face of the **holiness** of God. We also see his willingness to serve the Lord even though the people would hear, but **not** understand, and few positive results would come from Isaiah's efforts.
8. We can be challenged by how the people of Isaiah's day were sinning.
 - Their **sacrifices** and **assemblies** were empty because their heart was different, 1:11-15; 29:13;
 - Note 5:8-24; They **cast away** the law of the Lord and **despised** the Word, 11:24; Manifestations: materialism, v. 8; Drunkenness, v.11; Music and celebration – but did not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands, v.12
 - Perversion of **moral** values, v. 20
 - **Hypocrisy**, mouth speaking folly, 9:17
 - **Pride**, cp. 14:13-14 Lucifer
 - Rebellious, would not **hear** the law of the Lord, 30:9,12. They wanted the prophets to speak "**smooth** things", 30:10.
9. They **trusted** in Egypt (foreign alliances), man (schemes of wickedness), and idols **instead** of God.
 - Egypt – 30:1; 31:1; 36:9
 - Schemes – 30:12; 47:10
 - Idols – 42:17

Isaiah 66:2

... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and contrite spirit,
and trembleth at my word.