

Isaiah – Part One

Segment 1 – Isaiah 1:1

Introduction – Outline, Chronology

This class is an overview of the first half of the book of Isaiah. It will briefly cover the first 39 chapters. Some theories postulate that chapters 1-39 were written at one time by one author and that chapters 40- 66 were written at another time, maybe even hundreds of years later, by another author. However, we believe what is written in II Timothy 3:16.

II Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Jesus and other New Testament writers ascribe verses to the Prophet Isaiah from the entire book, not just parts of it. After the book of Psalms, Isaiah is the most quoted Old Testament book. Sometimes Isaiah is quoted, but no reference is made to the prophet's name. However, there are 20 direct New Testament quotes where the prophet Isaiah or the book which bears his name is given direct credit.

Matthew 3:3 – Quote of Isaiah 40:3

Matthew 4:14-15 – Quote of Isaiah 9:1

Matthew 8:17 – Quote of Isaiah 53:4

Matthew 12:17-18 – Quote of Isaiah 42:1

Matthew 13:14-15 – Quote of Isaiah 6:9-10

Matthew 15:7-9 – Quote of Isaiah 29:13

Mark 1:2 – Quote of Isaiah 40:3

Mark 7:6-7 – Quote of Isaiah 29:13

Luke 3:4 – Quote of Isaiah 40:3

Luke 4:17-19 – Quote of Isaiah 61:1-2

John 1:23 – Quote of Isaiah 40:3

John 12:38-39 – Quote of Isaiah 53:1

John 12:41 – Quote of Isaiah 6:10

Acts 8:28, 30, 32-33 – Quote of Isaiah 53:7-8

Acts 28:25-27 – Quote of Isaiah 6:9-10

Romans 9:27-28 – Quote of Isaiah 10:22-23

Romans 9:29 – Quote of Isaiah 1:9

Romans 10:16 – Quote of Isaiah 53:1

Romans 10:20-21 – Quote of Isaiah 65:1-2

Romans 15:12 – Quote of Isaiah 11:10

Isaiah 1:1

The son of Amoz - 13 times, the Scriptures refer to Isaiah as “the son of Amoz.” This is not the prophet Amos, writer of the book Amos. Traditional rabbinical teaching is that Amoz, Isaiah's father, was a brother of

King Amaziah, which would make Isaiah a cousin to King Uzziah. If this is true, then Isaiah was of royal descent of the tribe of Judah. Whether or not this teaching is correct, Isaiah's writings indicate that he was a well-educated man and he clearly had access to the kings of Judah.

Isaiah was married (Is 8:3) and had at least two children (Is 7:3 and 8:3). The time and circumstances of Isaiah's death are not recorded, but according to Jewish tradition, according to the Talmud, Isaiah was sawed in half by King Manasseh (II Kings 21:16; Heb 11:37).

The vision of Isaiah He saw this concerning Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The years of Isaiah's prophecy span at least 50 years, probably longer (between 740BC – 680BC). Contemporaries of Isaiah include Hosea (Hosea 1:1), Amos (Amos 1:1), and Micah (Micah 1:1).

These chapters in Kings and Chronicles provide historical background to the time period of the prophecy of Isaiah.

II Kings 15:27-38; 16:1ff; 17:1ff; 18:1ff; 19:1ff; 20:1ff

II Chronicles 26:22-23; 27:1ff; 28:1ff; 29:1ff; 30:1ff; 31:1ff; 32:1ff

The dates for the prophecy of Isaiah historically take place during the rise of the great Assyrian Empire. Throughout these first 39 chapters, the presence of these powerful kings of Assyria looms in the background. This first part of the book of Isaiah has over 40 references to Assyria or the Assyrian. However, starting in chapter 40, the Assyrian king is briefly mentioned only one time.

The Assyrians defeated the northern Kingdom of Israel and carried them away into captivity. Also, the Assyrians wreaked havoc on the southern Kingdom of Judah and almost wiped them out until the miracle that occurred during the reign of King Hezekiah, as recorded in Isaiah chapters 36 and 37.

Segment 2 – Isaiah 1:2 – 5:30

Introductory Chapters

The chronological order of events does not begin until chapter six (Isaiah 6:1).

Isaiah 1:1 is a summation of the times of the prophet Isaiah's writing. His ministry spanned more than 50 years. The state of the nation of Judah, as is expressed in this first chapter, could have occurred at any time during these 50 years. Most likely, this is describing the state of the nation towards the end of these 50 years, during the early part of the reign of King Hezekiah. The first five chapters are an introduction to the entire book.

In chapter one, the nation of Judah is in dire straits. The land is desolate, and the cities have been burned (verse 7). This chapter could very well be describing the condition of the nation of Judah during the early years of King Hezekiah, after the evil reign of King Ahaz when the Assyrian nation was devastating the land. The deliverance from Assyria is recorded in chapter 37. The book of Isaiah starts out describing this terrible condition of the nation of Judah.

Isaiah 1:2

“Listen, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:” (Deut4:26; 30:19; 32:1; Ps 50:4). God is making His case against Judah, calling heaven and earth as witnesses against Judah (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Isaiah 1:2-3

God’s people did not understand. The donkey was wiser than God’s people.

Isaiah 1:4-9

The land was in desolation.

“It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.” This very likely is describing the situation in Judah when the Assyrians had devastated most of the land.

“Daughter of Zion” - The phrase “daughter of Zion” here means Zion itself or Jerusalem, possibly including the people of Jerusalem. The name “daughter” is given to it by a personification in accordance with a common custom in Eastern writers, by which beautiful towns and cities are likened to young females (i.e. “daughter of Tyre” means Tyre; “daughter of Babylon” means Babylon).

“Like a watchman’s hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city” - Jerusalem had become like a temporary shack in a field. Once the harvest time is over, the shack is left alone and would simply deteriorate over time.

“Like Sodom and Gomorrah”

Isaiah 1:10-15

Judah had gone the way of northern Israel. Although Hezekiah was attempting to make reforms, by the time he became king, the people of Judah were influenced by King Ahaz and were following other gods (II Kings 17:6-20; II Chronicles 28:1-4; 16-25).

“I will hide My eyes from you, I will not listen.” God would not listen to their prayers.

Isaiah 1:16-20

A call to repentance

Isaiah 1:21

The faithful city (Jerusalem) has become a harlot.

Isaiah 1:22-31

Zion has been corrupted, but it will be redeemed by the Lord Yahweh of Hosts!

Isaiah 2:1ff

The hope of the coming Kingdom of God

The book of Isaiah set a pattern that you can see in all the prophets.

Prophets stood with the priests as God's special representatives. The prophet's role was to speak for God and to confront the people and their leaders with God's commands. Their messages were most often ones of repentance and warning regarding God's judgment. They also declared the glorious hope of the coming Messiah and God's Kingdom on earth. Because of their confrontational stance and the continual tendency of the people to disobey God, true prophets usually were not very popular. Yet, though their messages often went unheeded, they faithfully and forcefully proclaimed the truth.

The Prophet's Message

- Confrontation
- Repentance
- Warning
- God's Judgment
- Hope

Isaiah

Part 1 (Chapters 1 – 39)

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Appendix C: Supplemental Readings

Immanuel

By John A Cortright

Matthew 1:18-25 is the record of the young man Joseph and the birth of Jesus.

In the midst of this record of Joseph's dream, Matthew received revelation that this birth would fulfill a prophecy from the book of Isaiah.

Matthew 1:22-23

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

Many Christian commentaries have been written about this prophetic word, and many Jewish writers, who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ, have also given their input as to the Hebraic understanding of these words from the Prophet Isaiah.

The context in which this prophecy is written can be found in Isaiah chapter 7.

Isaiah 7:1-4

Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.

When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field, and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

This chapter begins when King Ahaz was king of Judah. The King of Israel, named Pekah, and the king of Syria (or Aram), named Rezin, formed an alliance and came down to attack Judah and the city of Jerusalem. The people were greatly afraid. Isaiah the prophet came to King Ahaz and told him that he need not be afraid of these two kings. They are merely smoldering firebrands. Their fire has gone out. It will not spread any more.

Isaiah 7:5-9

'Because Aram, *with* Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying,

"Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"

thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.

"For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, *so that it is* no longer a people), and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."

Here God specifically tells Ahaz that within 65 years, Ephraim (the northern Kingdom of Israel) will be shattered and that it will no longer be a people. God's admonition to Ahaz is not to worry. Everything will be OK. But, he states, "If you will not believe, you surely will not last."

Isaiah 7:10-11

Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,

"Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make *it* deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

Now, to help Ahaz believe, God graciously offers him the chance to request a sign from Yahweh. No request would have been too big – "make *it* deep as Sheol or high as heaven." Here Ahaz was given a chance to strengthen his faith in Yahweh, to know that God was with the nation of Judah.

Isaiah 7:12

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"

Ahaz arrogantly rejected God's offer.

Isaiah 7:13

Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

Ahaz did not believe in Yahweh, nor did he believe the words of the Prophet Isaiah. So, God would give His own sign. However, rather than something that would help strengthen Ahaz's resolve, this was a sign of his unbelief. It is in this context that the prophecy of Immanuel is spoken.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

The word "virgin"

Many Christian commentaries declare that since a virgin is a woman who has not had sexual relations with a man, the only possible fulfillment of this prophecy is with Jesus, born of Mary, by divine conception. No other child was born of a virgin.

There are two Hebrew words which both the KJV and the NASB translate “virgin” – *bethulah* and *almah*. Jewish scholars point out the unique use of the Hebrew word translated “virgin” in the KJV and NASB versions. It is the Hebrew word *almah*. The primary Hebrew word for a virgin, a woman who has not had sexual relations, is the Hebrew word *bethulah*, not the word *almah*. The word *bethulah*, translated “virgin,” is used five other times in the book of Isaiah. Yet, here in Isaiah 7:14, the word *almah* is uniquely used. The English rendering of the Hebrew Tanakh translates this word as “young woman.” This word appears only seven times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Many Jewish scholars state that this word does not necessarily mean a woman who has not had sexual relations. In fact, the word can mean a young married woman as it is used in Proverbs 30:19: “...And the way of a man with a maid [*almah*].”

While the arguments between scholars may differ on the correct translation of this word, there is another possibility that exists – that the Hebrew word *almah* could be deliberately ambiguous. A study of the first usage of both these Hebrew words is very enlightening. Both of these words *bethulah* and *almah* are used in the same record in the book of Genesis.

Abraham asked his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. He asked him not to look in the land of Canaan but rather to go to his relative’s household in the city of Nahor. The servant prayed that the girl who came to draw water and offered a drink would be the one that would be a wife for Isaac. A description of Rebekah coming to the spring to draw water is written in Genesis 24:16.

Genesis 24:16a

The girl was beautiful, a virgin (*bethulah*), and no man had had relations with her.

Here, the word *bethulah* is used, and the distinction that no man had had relations with her helps to substantiate the meaning of *bethulah* as a virgin.

Later on, the servant reiterates this story to Laban, Rebekah’s brother.

Genesis 24:43a

“Behold, I am standing by the spring and may it be that the maiden (*almah*) who comes out to draw.”

So, in the first place where these Hebrew words appear in Scripture, both *almah*, and *bethulah* are used to describe the same young woman, Rebekah – a beautiful young woman, a virgin, who had not had relations with a man.

The dual meaning of Isaiah 7:14

This makes the use of *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 very significant. It can have an ambiguous meaning, and here, in Isaiah, is a beautiful double-entendre (pronounced “doo blan tan dra”).

It is a prophecy with dual meaning, fulfilled at two different times.

- The first fulfillment occurred shortly after it was spoken. Isaiah the prophet had a son born of a young woman (*almah*), his wife the prophetess.
- The second fulfillment occurred over 700 hundred years later with the birth of Jesus the Messiah, born of Mary, a virgin (*almah*).

The name "Immanuel" means "God with us" or "with us is God." This is simply the meaning of the name. It does not mean that the child born is God Himself, but the birth of this child would be a sign that God was with His people. It is also important to note that this does not necessarily mean that "God is for us" but rather "God is with us." God can be with His people in judgment just as much as He can be with His people to bring salvation. Many times in the Bible, signs were symbolic of Israel's unbelief.

There is more that follows in the context of this prophecy.

Isaiah 7:14-16

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good.

For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

In the time when this was spoken, a child would be born of an *almah* (young woman). Also, before this child knew enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land of these two kings (Israel and Syria) would be forsaken.

Ahaz did not believe the words of Isaiah. He was afraid. So, instead of believing Isaiah, Ahaz took matters into his own hands. He took gold from the temple and paid the king of Assyria to attack the kingdoms of Israel and Syria (or Aram). The king of Assyria took the money from Ahaz and defeated these two kings. (II Kings 16:7-19)

However, that was not the end of the matter. The king of Assyria didn't stop with just Syria and Israel. The Assyrians would begin attacking the southern tribe of Judah as well.

Isaiah 7:17

"The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria."

This was an evil time for the nation of Judah, provoking the LORD to anger.

The book of Chronicles records this time in Judah's history.

II Chronicles 28:16, 19-25

At that time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria for help.

For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.

So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him.

Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the LORD and out of the palace of the king and of the princes, and gave *it* to the king of Assyria, it did not help him.

Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD.

For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they became the downfall of him and all Israel.

Moreover, when Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, he cut the utensils of the house of God in pieces; and he closed the doors of the house of the LORD and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem.

In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers, to anger.

God was with His people in spite of their unbelief and their unfaithfulness. More information about this first fulfillment of the child "Immanuel" is covered in Isaiah chapter 8. God was with His people in judgment.

Isaiah 8:1-10; 18

Then the LORD said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.

"And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."

So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz (which means "swift is the booty, speedy is the prey");

for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

Again the LORD spoke to me further, saying,

"Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;

"Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, *Even* the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.

"Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck; And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

"Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered; And give ear, all remote places of the earth. Gird yourselves, yet be shattered; Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.

"Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted; State a proposal, but it will not stand, For God is with us. (Immanuel)"

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

The children the LORD gave Isaiah were for signs and wonders in Israel. The first fulfillment of the prophecy about Immanuel was a sign of Israel's unbelief. God was with the Prophet Isaiah, and He was with the nation of Judah in judgment. The LORD was to be feared, not these other kings. This would be a dark time for the nation of Judah.

Isaiah 8:22

Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven away into darkness.

However, Israel had another hope. Another child would be born. Whereas, at the time of Isaiah, there was darkness, another child would bring hope, light, and salvation.

Isaiah 9:1-7

But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.

You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.

For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

This is a description of the second fulfillment of this prophecy. When the fullness of time came, Jesus was born of a woman, a virgin, fulfilling this part of Isaiah's prophecy. Truly, with this child, it can be said "Immanuel" or "God is with us." A great light would shine on them! A child would be born that would sit on the throne of David forevermore and establish peace, justice, and righteousness. This child would bring salvation to God's people!