

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Isaiah

—by Peter Hammond

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the Government shall be upon His shoulder. And His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end.” Isaiah 9:6-7



Isaiah is a mini-Bible in structure. Like the Bible, Isaiah has 66 chapters in two main sections. 39 chapters in the first section (like the Old Testament) and 27 in the second section (like the New Testament). The

dies for the sins of His people, and is raised and exalted! It declares to God's people: "You are My witnesses..." Isaiah 44:8. "...and all the ends of the earth will see the Salvation of our God." Isaiah 52:10 (CF Acts 1:8).

The first part of Isaiah deals more with sin and retribution, whereas the second part focuses more on salvation and redemption.

message of the first 39 chapters of Isaiah summarises the message of the Old Testament. The last 27 chapters summarises the message of the New Testament.

The Old Testament opens with God's case against man because of his sin. Isaiah opens the same way: "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18.

The servant of the Lord

The book of Isaiah speaks of the Servant of the Lord, anointed by the Holy Spirit, who

Messianic prophecies

Isaiah is one of the most quoted Books in the Bible. Some of the most famous verses in Isaiah include: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign, behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14.

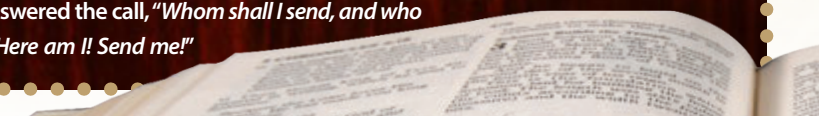
"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Isaiah 11:2.

"You will keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." Isaiah 26:3.

"But those who wait on the Lord shall re-

Who was Isaiah?

His parents named him Yesa-Yahu, which means Yahweh saves. Isaiah was born in the palace. Brought up in court, the grandson of King Joash and the cousin of King Uzziah. Isaiah had wealth, rank and education. Isaiah's wife was a prophetess and they had at least two sons. As a young man, he encountered the Lord in the Temple and was overwhelmed with a vision of the holiness of God. 50 times, Isaiah describes God as "The Holy One of Israel." This is a Name that is not used by anyone else. Isaiah answered the call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" with "Here am I! Send me!"



The coming King

The first section closes with a prophecy of the coming King of righteousness and the Redemption of Israel, just as the prophets close the Old Testament with predictions of His coming Kingdom. "But to you who fear My Name, the Son of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings..." Malachi 4:2.

Prepare the way

Isaiah is a Messianic Book. The second part of Isaiah, starting with chapter 40, begins with "Comfort, yes, comfort, My people! Says Your God...the voice of one crying in the wilderness; prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together..." Isaiah 40:1-5. These are the very words used by John the Baptist at the beginning of the New Testament (Matthew 3:1-3).



new their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings Good News, who pro-

Geo-strategic prophet

Isaiah moved freely in court circles and counselled kings. Many of his prophecies deal with political issues, especially the false security of making alliances with Assyria and Egypt.

The second part of Isaiah deals with comfort first and then glory, focusing on the Servant of the Lord who will suffer and die for the sins of His people, but rise and be exalted.

claims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation...Your God reigns!" Isaiah 52:7.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity." Isaiah 59:1-3.

To heal the broken-hearted

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me. To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..." Isaiah 61:1-2. It was this very passage that the Lord proclaimed in Nazareth at the beginning of His public ministry.

Isaiah delivered prophecies against the Syrians in the North, the Ammonites, Moabites, Arabs and Edomites to the South, to the Philistines and Egyptians in the West, and the powers of Assyria and Babylon to the East.

Idolatry and immorality

The prophets were the evangelists of the Old Testament. All of their writings were rebukes of the immorality and idolatry of the people. The prophets warned of defeat, dispersion, captivity and exile for God's people, if they continued in their immorality and idolatry.

Evaluating the kings

The Books of Kings tell us whether the king in question was good, or bad, in the eyes of the Lord. For example, the five kings who reigned during the life time of Isaiah were:

- **Uzziah**, who, when he was a good king, defeated the Arabs and the »

The Prophets

There are 17 prophetic Books in the Old Testament. Their division into the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets is not because of their importance, but because of the length. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are called Major Prophets, because of the size of their Books. The prophets to the Northern Kingdom of Israel were: Amos, Hosea, and Ezekiel. The prophets to Nineveh were Jonah and Nahum. The prophet to Babylon was Daniel. The prophet to Edom was Obadiah. The prophets to Judah (the Southern Kingdom) were: Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.



THE BIBLE

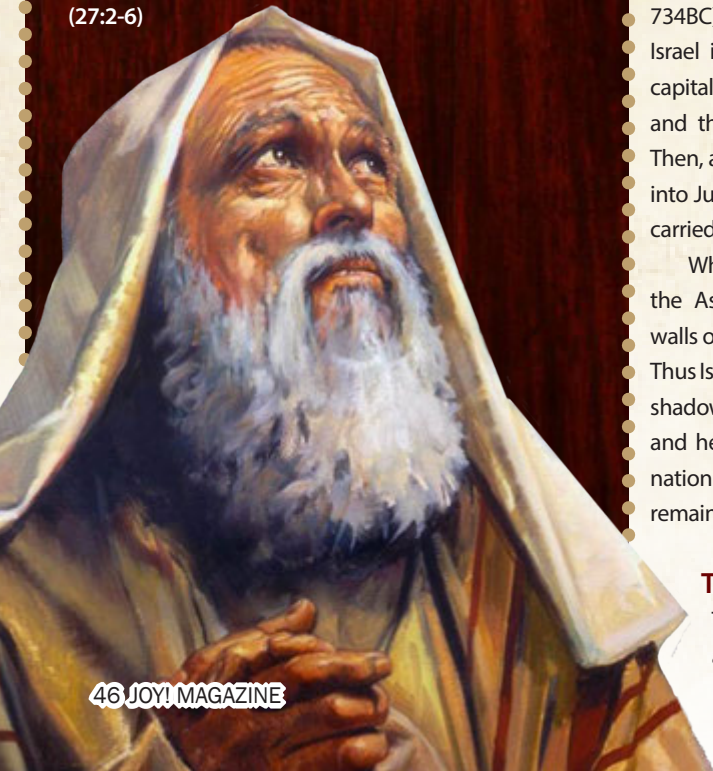
in a nutshell

Isaiah



The Prophecies of Isaiah

- Judah to be delivered from Syria and Israel (7:4-7, 16)
- Syria and Israel to be destroyed by Assyria (8:4; 7:1-14)
- Assyria to invade Judah (8:7-8)
- Philistines to be subjugated (14:28-32)
- Moab to be plundered (15,16)
- Egypt and Ethiopia to be conquered by Assyria (20:4)
- Arabia to be pillaged (21:13-17)
- Tyre to be subdued (23:1-12)
- The captivity and restoration of Tyre (23:13-18)
- Edom's perpetual desolation (34:5-17)
- Jerusalem to be delivered from Assyria (36)
- Hezekiah's life to be extended 15 years (38:5)
- Babylonian captivity of Judah (39:5-7)
- Babylon to be overthrown by Cyrus (46:11)
- Babylon to be defeated by the Medes and Elamites (13:17; 21:2; 48:14)
- Babylon's desolation (13:20-22)
- Israel to be restored (17:12-13; 48:20; 51:14)
- The Word to permeate Egypt and Assyria (19:18-25)
- The Word of God to spread over the whole world (27:2-6)



Philistines, but when he deteriorated, he was defeated by the Assyrians.

- King **Jotham** was a good king and he defeated the Ammonites and Syrians.
- **Ahaz** was a bad king, married to the wicked Jezebel, and was defeated by the Edomites, Philistines and Assyrians.
- **Hezekiah** was a good king who defeated the Philistines and the Assyrians. However, he foolishly showed the Babylonians all his treasures, which they later returned to loot.
- **Manasseh** was an evil king (who even engaged in demonic human sacrifices), and was defeated by the Assyrians.

Isaiah was the prophet who was cut in half by king Manasseh (as referred to in Hebrews 11:37). Manasseh forbade Isaiah to speak, so that is why he placed his prophecies in writings, which has blessed countless generations.

The life and times of Isaiah

While Isaiah was yet a young man (in 734BC), Assyria carried away all of Northern Israel into exile. 13 Years later (721) the capital of Northern Israel, Samaria, fell, and the rest of Israel was carried away. Then, a few years later, the Assyrians came into Judah, destroyed 46 walled cities and carried away 200,000 captives.

When Isaiah was an old man (701BC) the Assyrians were stopped before the walls of Jerusalem by an Angel of the Lord. Thus Isaiah's whole life was spent under the shadow of the threatening Assyrian power, and he himself witnessed the ruin of his nation at their hands, with only Jerusalem remaining at the time of his death.

The deliverance of Jerusalem

Through Isaiah's prayer, by his advice to King Hezekiah, and

through the direct miraculous intervention of Almighty God, the dreaded Assyrian army was scattered as they lay siege to the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36-37). Although King Sennacherib of Assyria lived another 20 years after this defeat, he never again attempted to threaten Jerusalem.

Justice and mercy

The contrast between the first part and the second half of Isaiah is startling. Part 1 (chapters 1 – 39) has more bad news than good; the second part (chapters 40 – 66) has more good news than bad. The first part deals with human activity whereas the second part mostly with Divine activity. The main word in the first part of Isaiah is: Justice, and from Isaiah 40, it is Mercy.

Confronting and comforting

The first part of Isaiah deals with confronting and the second with comforting. The first part is more national, dealing with the God of Israel, whereas the second part focuses more on the Creator and Eternal Judge of the universe and is international in scope.

Fire and Father

God is emphasised as **Fire** in the first half and as **Father** in the second half. God's hand is upraised to **strike** in the first half and outstretched to **save** in the second. There are many curses in the first half and more blessings in the second. The first part deals with before the exile to Babylon whereas the second half deals with after the Exile.

Repent and Believe

Part 1 of Isaiah focuses on a call to Repentance and Faith. The key words are Repent and Believe. In the light of



the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, Messianic prophecies are given of the virgin who will give birth to a Child who will be called Immanuel (God with us), a descendant of King David. He will be called , *"Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace, there shall be no end"*.

Jesus in Isaiah

The prophets also spoke of the coming Messiah, faultless and perfect, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a Sacrifice who will die, the Just for the unjust, the Servant of God and the King of all, and His reign that will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Jesus is the Child called Immanuel, the Son born of the virgin, the Servant wounded for our transgressions, the Judge who will rule the nations.

If you want to know the Bible, you must study Isaiah. The Gospel of John declares that Isaiah *"saw His glory and spoke of Him."* John 12:41.

Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah

- The virgin birth of God with us (7:14)
- The Deity, power and eternity of the Messiah (9:6-7)
- The whipping, suffering, and vicarious Atonement of the Messiah(53)
- His death with the wicked and His burial with the rich (53)
- *"I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring."* (44:3)
- He will bring an end to all wars (2:4; 65:25)
- The eternal separation of the righteous and the wicked (66:15, 22-24)
- The destruction of death (25:8; 26:19)

A very influential book

The Messianic prophecy: *"they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks"* (Isaiah 2:4) is plagiarised by the United Nations. This verse is on a block of granite outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York, without attributing its source. However, they do not quote the whole verse for it states: *"He shall judge among the nations..."* There is no peace without the Prince of Peace!

Isaiah is a great introduction to the Bible as it summarises all of its themes. It explains the Old Testament and it illuminates the New Testament. Isaiah is the Bible in miniature. ■

PETER HAMMOND is a missionary, Bible teacher and author. For more info: Tel: 021 689 4480; www.frontline.org.za; mission@frontline.org.za