

**Notes & Outlines**

# **ISAIAH**

J. Vernon McGee

## PROPHETIC BOOKS

Beginning with Isaiah, and continuing through the Old Testament, there is a section of Scripture called the prophetic portion of the Bible. Although the predictive element bulks large in this section, the prophets were more than fortune-tellers. Actually, they were men raised up of God in a decadent day when both priest and king were no longer worthy channels through whom the expressions of God might flow.

These men not only spoke of events in the far-off future but also spoke of local events in the immediate future. They had to speak in this manner in order to qualify for this office under God, according to the Mosaic code:

*But the prophet, who shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.* (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

If the local event did not transpire just as the prophet predicted, he was labeled a false prophet and was so treated. You may be sure that the message of the false prophet is not in the library of inspired Scripture. The prophetic books are filled with events that are local and fulfilled. A sharp distinction needs to be drawn between this portion and that which is yet to be fulfilled.

One of the greatest evidences of the fact that these men were speaking the words of God is revealed in the hundreds of prophecies that have been **fulfilled literally**. Man cannot guess the future. Even the meteorologists have difficulty in prognosticating the weather twenty-four hours in advance, although they have the advantage of all sorts of scientific and mechanical devices to assist them. No modern weather forecaster could have been an accepted

prophet in Israel! The law of compound probability forbids man from consistently foretelling the future. Each uncertain element added decreases the chance of accuracy by fifty percent. The example of hundreds of prophecies literally fulfilled has a genuine appeal to the honest mind and sincere seeker after the truth. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the infallible proofs of plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture.

The predictive element is the peculiar and particular contribution of these men of God. This does not mean there was not this element before them or after them. The last book of the Bible closes the message of God for the future.

The prophets were extremely **nationalistic**. They rebuked sin in high as well as low places. They warned the nation. They pleaded with a proud people to humble themselves and return to God. Fire and tears were mingled in their message, which was not one of doom and gloom alone, for they saw the Day of the Lord and the glory to follow. All of them looked through the darkness to the dawn of a new day. In the night of sin they saw the light of a coming Savior and Sovereign; they saw the millennial kingdom coming in all its fullness. Their message must be interpreted before an appreciation of the kingdom in the New Testament can be attained. The correct perspective of the kingdom must be gained through the eye of the Old Testament prophets.

The prophets were not supermen — they were men of like passions as we are, but having spoken for God, their message is still the infallible and inspired Word of God:

*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (1 Peter 1:10, 11)*

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth*

*in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star  
arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophe-  
cy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For  
the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man,  
but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the  
Holy Spirit.* (2 Peter 1:19-21)

*Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet not to be wronged by a  
mere mortal touch.*

— William Cowper

# ISAIAH

**WRITER:** Isaiah (1:1)

Most of the prophets moved in an orbit of obscurity and anonymity. They did not project their personalities into the prophecies they proclaimed. Jeremiah and Hosea are the exceptions to this, of course. Isaiah gives us very little of an historical character concerning himself. There are a few scant references to his life and ministry. In Isaiah 1:1 he gives “the days” in which his lot was cast. It was during the reigns of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” These were not the darkest days in Judah internally. Uzziah and Hezekiah were enlightened rulers who sought to serve God. But the days were extremely dark because of the menace of the formidable kingdom of Assyria in the north. The northern kingdom of Israel was carried away into captivity during this period.

Isaiah 6 records the personal call and commission of Isaiah. This chapter should come first in the prophecy — logically if not chronologically.

Isaiah 36 — 39 is the historical section, which records the **ministry** of Isaiah during the crisis when the Assyrian host encompassed Jerusalem.

Beyond these few personal sections, Isaiah stands in the shadow as he points to another Person who is coming.

It is stated by some that Isaiah belonged to the royal family of David. This cannot be positively affirmed.

Likewise, it has been stated that he is referred to in Hebrews 11:37 as the one “sawn asunder.” This may or may not be true. The liberal critic has sawn him asunder in forging the **fake fabric** of the Deutero-Isaiah hypothesis. Some have gone so far as to fabricate a Trito-Isaiah. There is not a scrap of documentary evidence beyond the skepticism of the destructive critic. They have cut Isaiah up like a railroad restaurant pie. History presents only one Isaiah, not two or three. This method of the destructive critic could be applied one thousand years hence to prove just as easily

that there were three Dwight Eisenhowers:

- 1st — General Eisenhower, the military leader of the victorious forces of World War II — European theatre.
- 2nd — President Eisenhower of the United States, elected in 1952 and 1956.
- 3rd — Dwight D. Eisenhower, the invalid man and victim of a heart attack and a serious operation for ileitis.

We know that only one man by the name of Eisenhower fulfilled all those requirements. Likewise, only one man by the name of Isaiah can easily fulfill all the requirements as the sole author of the Book of Isaiah.

### **THEME:**

As the New Testament presents the Lord Jesus Christ as its theme, so Isaiah presents the Lord Jesus Christ as his theme. Isaiah has been called the 5th evangelist; the Book of Isaiah has been called the 5th Gospel. Christ's virgin birth, His character, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His second coming are all presented in Isaiah with definiteness and clarity. (See 1 Peter 1:10, 11; cp. Luke 4:16-22 with Isaiah 61:1-4.)

### **STYLE AND CONTENT:**

The prophecy of Isaiah is strikingly similar to the entire Bible, which can be seen in the following comparison:

<b>Bible</b>	<b>Book of Isaiah</b>
66 Books	66 Chapters
39 Books in Old Testament	39 Chapters on LAW, the Government of God
27 Books in New Testament	27 Chapters on GRACE, Salvation of God

Also, there are some 66 direct quotations from Isaiah in the New Testament. Some people have found 85 quotations and allu-

sions to Isaiah in the New Testament.

20 of the 27 books of the New Testament refer to Isaiah;  
12 books of the New Testament have direct quotations.

ISAIAH is woven into the New Testament as a brightly colored thread woven into a beautiful pattern.

ISAIAH is discernible and conspicuous in the New Testament.

ISAIAH is chiseled into the rock of the New Testament with the power tool of the Holy Spirit.

ISAIAH is often used to enforce and enlarge upon those passages that speak of Christ.

The historic interlude (chapters 36—39) leaves the high plateau of prophecy and drops down to the record of history. Even the form of language is different. It is couched in the form of prose rather than poetry. Why are these four chapters of an historical character wedged in between the two major divisions of the book? This is a reasonable question that requires investigation and rewards the honest inquirer. There are several significant factors worthy of mention:

1. Sacred and secular history are not the same. Dr. Jennings states, “Divine history is never merely history, never simply a true account of past events.” There are great **spiritual truths** couched in sacred history that are seen only by the eye of faith. The Holy Spirit must teach us the divine purpose in recording scriptural history. Let us note several suggestive reasons:

- a. These incidents might seem trite to the average historian who records great world movements; but events concerning God’s people were important according to the standards of heaven.
- b. Actually these chapters note the transfer of power from Assyria to Babylon. Babylon was the real menace to God’s people and was to begin the period designated by our Lord as “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).
- c. This section is a record of a son of David who was beset by enemies and who went down to the verge of death but

was delivered and continued to reign. In this he foreshadows the great Son of David who was beset by enemies, delivered to death, raised from the dead, and who is coming again to reign. Hezekiah was only a man who walked in the ways of David, another weak man. Hezekiah lived to play the fool. Our Lord was greater than David and, as the crucified and risen Son of God, is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There are other great spiritual truths which we will note in the chapter outlines.

2. The second significant factor in this historic section is that these particular events are **recorded three times** in the Scriptures — 2 Kings 18, 19; 2 Chronicles 29, 30; and here in Isaiah. The fact that the Holy Spirit saw fit to record them three times is in itself a matter of great importance. These records are not identical but similar. Some scholars think Isaiah is the author of all three or at least the one in Kings. Surely the Spirit of God has some special truth for us here that should cause us not to hurry over these events as if they were of no great moment.

3. Three significant and **stupendous miracles** are recorded in this brief section:

- a. The death angel slays 185,000 Assyrians (37:36-38).
- b. God heals Hezekiah and extends his life fifteen years (38:1-5).
- c. The sun retreats ten degrees on the sun dial of Ahaz (38:7, 8).

4. This section opens with Assyria and closes with Babylon. There are two **important letters** that Hezekiah received:

- a. The first was from Assyria, which Hezekiah took directly to God in prayer (37:14); and God delivered His people.
- b. The second letter was from the king of Babylon which flattered Hezekiah and which he did not take to the Lord in prayer. As a result, it led to the undoing of Judah (39:1-8).



The third and last major division (chapters 40 — 66) returns to the poetic form but is in contrast to the first major section. There we had judgment and the righteous government of God; here we have the grace of God, the suffering, and glory to follow. Here all is grace and glory. The opening “comfort ye” sets the mood and tempo.

It is this section that has caused the liberal critics to postulate the Deutero-Isaiah hypothesis. A change of subject matter does not necessitate a change of authorship. It is interesting that for 1900 years there was not a word about a second Isaiah. John refers to this section as authored by Isaiah (John 1:23). Our Lord likewise referred to this section as written by Isaiah (Luke 4:17-21). There are numerous other references that similarly confirm the authorship of Isaiah.

Philip used a chapter from this section to win an Ethiopian to Christ (Acts 8).

The prophecy of Isaiah presents another important aspect of prophecy. This has to do with the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture.

***All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.***  
(2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

One of the most solid proofs of the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture is fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah contains many prophecies that have been fulfilled since he wrote them.

There were many false prophets in Israel, as the Scriptures reveal. Read the entire record in 2 Chronicles 18. Note especially 18:22 — “Now, therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these, thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.”

The prophet had to speak into a local situation and in respect to contemporary events of his day. If his prophecy failed to materi-

alize, then he was declared a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). If the matter came to pass, he was declared a true prophet. Isaiah prophesied into many local events. When Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian army, Isaiah made a very **daring prophecy** —

*Therefore, thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.* (Isaiah 37:33)

Also see his prophecy concerning the sickness of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38.

There are other prophecies that were not fulfilled in his lifetime, but today they stand fulfilled. See, for instance, his prophecies concerning the city of Babylon:

*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and ostriches shall dwell there, and he-goats shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the coastlands shall cry in their desolate houses, and jackals in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.* (Isaiah 13:19-22)

Further fulfillments relative to Babylon are recorded in Isaiah 47. Excavations at Babylon have revealed the accuracy of these prophecies. More than fifty miles of the walls of Babylon have been excavated. The culture of this great civilization is still impressive but lies in dust and debris today according to the written word of Isaiah. This is one of many examples that could be given. Others will come before us in this study as we proceed through the book.

## OUTLINE:

### I. **Judgment (poetry)**, Chapters 1 — 35

Revelation of the Sovereign on the throne.

(The Crown, chapter 6. The government of God.)

A. Solemn call to the universe to come into the courtroom to hear God's charge against the nation Israel, Chapter 1

B. Preview of the future for Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 2

C. Present view of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 3

D. Another preview of the future, Chapter 4

E. Parable of the vineyard and woes predicted on Israel, Chapter 5

F. Isaiah's personal call and commission as prophet, Chapter 6

G. Prediction of local and far events, Chapters 7 — 10  
(Hope of future in coming Child)

H. Millennial kingdom, Chapters 11, 12

I. Burdens of surrounding nations (largely fulfilled), Chapters 13 — 23

1. Burden of Babylon, Chapters 13, 14

2. Burden of Moab, Chapters 15, 16

3. Burden of Damascas, Chapter 17

4. Burden of the land beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, Chapter 18

5. Burden of Egypt, Chapters 19, 20

6. Burden of Babylon, Edom, Arabia, Chapter 21

7. Burden of the Valley of Vision, Chapter 22

8. Burden of Tyre, Chapter 23

J. Kingdom, process and program by which the throne is established on earth, Chapters 24 — 34

K. Kingdom, mundane blessings of the Millennium, Chapter 35

### II. **Historic interlude (prose)**, Chapters 36 — 39

*(This section is probably a prophetic picture of how God will deliver His people in the Great Tribulation [see 2 Kings 18, 19 and 2 Chronicles 29, 30].)*

- A. King Hezekiah and the invasion of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, Chapter 36
- B. King Hezekiah's prayer and the destruction of the Assyrian hosts, Chapter 37
- C. King Hezekiah's sickness, prayer and healing, Chapter 38
- D. King Hezekiah plays the fool, Chapter 39

### III. **Salvation (poetry)**, Chapters 40 — 66

Revelation of the Savior in the place of suffering.

(The Cross, chapter 53. The grace of God. *There is a three-fold division marked by the concluding thought in each division, "There is no peace to the wicked."*)

- A. Comfort of Jehovah which comes through the Servant, Chapters 40 — 48  
(Polemic against idolatry — help and hope come only through the Servant.)
- B. Salvation of Jehovah which comes through the suffering Servant, Chapters 49 — 57
  - 1. Redeemer of the whole world, who is God's Servant, Chapters 49:1— 52:12
  - 2. Redemption wrought by the suffering Servant, who is God's Sheep (Lamb), Chapters 52:13 — 53:12
  - 3. Results of the redemption wrought by the Redeemer, who is God's only Savior, Chapters 54 — 57
- C. Glory of Jehovah which comes through the suffering Servant, Chapters 58 — 66
  - 1. Sin hinders the manifestation of the glory of God, Chapters 58, 59
  - 2. Redeemer is coming to Zion, Chapters 60 — 66  
(Nothing can hinder God's progress — He will judge sin.)

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Criswell, W. A. *Isaiah*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.
- Gaebelein, Arno C. *The Annotated Bible*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1917.
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(Highly recommended.)
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## HELPFUL BOOKS ON BIBLE PROPHECY:

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- Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Prophecy for Today*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961.
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*These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.*



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