

Introduction to Isaiah

The statement, “*Come now, and let us reason together*” (Isaiah 1:18), confirms that God knows the value of reasoning through the issues of life. In other words, He understands the importance of thinking. Many fail to enter the wonderful adventure of using their *minds* to bolster their faith, but the New Testament encourages it on several occasions (Matthew 22:37; Romans 12:2; 14:5; 1Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 4:23; 2Peter 3:1—a partial listing only). Therefore, expect to use your “thinker” as we travel through Isaiah’s masterpiece. This book has answers to a variety of issues if we will but commit to hearing all of what it is saying. I have studied Isaiah for years and have found it to be one of the most interesting sections of the entire word of God. Just buckle up, enjoy the ride, and expect to be blessed beyond measure.

I would like to take a moment to explain the format of this material. You will find that the notes associated with each of the verses covered in the book of Isaiah are pretty much self-contained. In other words, no matter which passage you are researching, a good deal of information is supplied, either in the notes relating to the verse itself or in the notes associated with the verses in close proximity, to place it in its proper timeframe (or as some say, “context”). For example, if you are studying Isaiah 7:14, that famous verse relating to the *virgin* birth of Christ, the corresponding notes will present such facts as its historical setting; why it was stated; how it fits into the timeline of the Old and New Testaments; and the meaning of the verse. The notes should also describe how that particular verse will impact future events. To state it differently, these materials should explain, from a Scriptural basis, not only when a particular event occurs, but why it occurs and how it impacts future events as well. This is of utmost importance when studying the prophetic section of God’s word. For years I searched for materials written in familiar terminology that could do what I have just described. It was with this need in mind that I set out to compile what you now have in hand. All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (the NASB) unless otherwise indicated. KJV is the King James Version. ASV is the American Standard Version. RSV is the Revised Standard Version. Note that paragraph symbols (¶) are included in the verses within Isaiah that begin a new thought.

The name “*Isaiah*” means “Jehovah is salvation” or “the salvation of Jehovah.” His name comes into play on several occasions in this book, especially as God prepares to “save” all believers through the virgin’s offspring of Isaiah 7:14, as He uses the suffering of the Messiah to bring “salvation” to all who will accept Him (Isaiah 53), as He reveals Israel’s future “salvation” in association with the Second Coming of Christ and Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 60-66), and as He “saves” (in a physical sense) Judah from the Assyrians in Isaiah 36-37.

As far as his family was concerned, Isaiah was *the son of Amoz* (1:1; 2:1; 13:1). *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* states the following concerning Amoz:

According to rabbinical tradition, he was also the brother of King Amaziah, and a prophet; but of this there is no proof.¹

Isaiah's wife was a *prophetess* (8:3), being referred to as such either because she was a prophet's wife or because she possessed the gift of prophecy. If she possessed the gift of prophecy, none of her prophecies are recorded. Isaiah had two sons, one named *Shear-jashub* (7:3), which means “a remnant will return,” and the other named *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* (8:3), which means “the spoil speeds and the prey hastens.” We will discover that both of their names are hugely significant as they relate to God’s dealings with the Hebrew people.

Isaiah was from Jerusalem and a master of the Hebrew language. He received his call as a prophet in Isaiah 6, a chapter that we will later study in much detail. He prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah *during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah* (1:1). He also had the prophets Micah (who prophesied to the southern kingdom), along with Amos and Hosea (who prophesied to the northern kingdom), as contemporaries. Note: The united kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms after King Solomon's death—the northern kingdom of *Israel* and the southern kingdom of *Judah* (1Kings 12; 2Chronicles 10). The capital of the northern kingdom was established in Samaria, while the capital of the southern kingdom was Jerusalem.

As to the major events that transpired during his ministry, he *saw the Lord* while being called as a prophet (Isaiah 6), was involved in an encounter with *King Ahaz* which resulted in the prophecy of the *virgin birth* (Isaiah 7), was called to go *naked and barefoot* (20:1-6), spoke on behalf of God when *Sennacherib* of *Assyria* invaded *Judah* during the *reign of King Hezekiah* (Isaiah 36-37), prophesied during *King Hezekiah's illness and recovery* (Isaiah 38), and addressed Hezekiah's lack of wisdom in showing *his treasures* to visitors from *Babylon* (Isaiah 39). *Isaiah* not only wrote the book of *Isaiah* (1:1), but also wrote a biography of *King Uzziah* of *Judah* (2Chronicles 26:22), a book which was either lost or destroyed. According to Jewish tradition, *Isaiah* was sawn in half by *King Manasseh* of *Judah*. This might be valid since *Manasseh shed so much innocent blood* (2Kings 21:16) and, based on Hebrews 11:37, such things occurred during Old Testament times.

Isaiah prophesied from 740-739 B.C. to 686-685 B.C. Assyria was at the zenith of her power when *Isaiah* began prophesying, but was in a state of decline toward the end of his ministry. It is obvious that he prophesied during the reigns of *Tiglath-pileser III* (745-727 B.C.), *Shalmaneser V* (727-722 B.C.), *Sargon II* (722-705 B.C.), and *Sennacherib* (704-681 B.C.), kings of Assyria. We can conclude this because *King Uzziah* of *Judah* (Isaiah 1:1) reigned from 790 to 740 B.C.; *King Hezekiah* (Isaiah 1:1) from 715 to 686 B.C. This means that *Isaiah* prophesied during the reigns of the last seven kings of the northern kingdom—*Jeroboam II* (793-753), *Zechariah* (753-752), *Shallum* (752), *Menahem* (752-742), *Pekahiah* (742-740), *Pekah* (752-732), and *Hoshea* (732-722)—confirming that he watched the northern kingdom digress from her prominence under *Jeroboam II* to the lowest of lows, even captivity under Assyrian rule in 722 B.C.

For proper interpretation of this book, it is imperative to have a general working knowledge of the four kings who reigned in *Judah* during *Isaiah's* ministry. We will take each of these kings and examine their lives in more detail as we progress in our study.

SUBJECTS DEALT WITH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

1. A call to the nation for repentance
2. God's sovereignty, power, and holiness
3. The remnant of Israel
4. The Tribulation
5. Prophecies relating the Christ's First Coming
6. Prophecies relating to Christ's Second Coming
7. Prophecies relating to the Millennium (the one thousand year reign of Christ)
8. The Assyrian invasion of Judah
9. The Virgin Birth
10. The "Branch"
11. The "Servant"
12. The "arm of the Lord"
13. The futility of idols
14. The Judgment of specific Gentile Nations
15. God's superiority over idols
16. The Suffering Savior

THE OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

Chapters 1-5—Introduction—A thumbnail sketch of the topics covered in much detail in chapters 7-66.

Chapter 6—Isaiah Is Called As A Prophet To The Southern Kingdom Of Judah

Chapters 7-12—The Book Of Immanuel

Chapters 13-23—Prophecies Against Other Nations

Chapters 24:1-27:13—The Day Of The Lord (The "Little Apocalypse Of Isaiah")

Chapters 28:1-39:8—King Hezekiah's Reign, Crisis, And Deliverance

Chapters 40:1-66:24—Prophecies Of Comfort For Jerusalem As Well As The Jews

¹ M. F. Unger, R. K. Harrison, H. F. Vos, & C. J. Barber (1988). *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, revision of Unger's Bible Dictionary. 3rd ed. ©1966. Chicago: Moody Press.