

Isaiah 1

Isaiah mentions topics in the first five chapters of this book that he explains in more detail in chapters 7-66. In Isaiah 6, a wonderful and very informative chapter, he received his call as a prophet.

Isaiah 1 can be broken down as follows:

Verses 1-9—God reminds His people of the negative impact of their sin

Verses 10-15—God rejects the manner in which they have offered sacrifices

Verses 16-20—God offers mercy and grace to the nation

Verses 21-23 God reminds His people of the sin abiding in Jerusalem

Verses 24-31 God sentences His people to judgment followed by a promise of restoration

Is. 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

As was stated in the introduction of these materials, the name *Isaiah* means "Jehovah is salvation" or "the salvation of Jehovah." Isaiah was *the son of Amoz* (1:1; 2:1; 13:1) and a prophet to *Judah and Jerusalem*.

Isaiah received a major portion of what he recorded through visions. In other words, he saw in his mind what God was revealing to him.

Four *kings* ruled in the southern kingdom during Isaiah's day. They were *Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*. We will look at their lives briefly before continuing.

King Uzziah (790-740 B.C.) is addressed in 2 Kings 14:21-15:8, and 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. Notice that he is referred to as *Azariah* in 2 Kings but is called *Uzziah* in 2 Chronicles. Just hitting the high spots, these passages allow us to conclude the following: While *Uzziah* was king of *Judah*, *Jeroboam II* was *king of Israel*. Together they controlled the same territory that King David and King Solomon had controlled years earlier—a very large segment of the land of Canaan. Therefore, the economy boomed, and the people were very pleased with Uzziah's leadership. He was a good king initially, seeking the Lord, fortifying the land, and defeating God's enemies. *Uzziah*, however, *did not remove the high places*. He later fell prey to *pride* and arrogance, even stooping so low as to attempt *to burn incense on the altar of incense within the temple* (a privilege granted only to the priests). As a result, God struck him with *leprosy*, and he later *died* (2Chronicles 26:19-21).

King Jotham (750 to 731 B.C.) is addressed in 2 Kings 15:7, 32-38, 2 Chronicles 26:23, and 27:1-9. From these passages we gather the following: *Jotham, Uzziah's son, ...did what was right in the sight of the Lord as his father...had done*; only he, like his *father*, did not remove *the high places*. He had success against his enemies and *built cities in the hill country of Judah* as well as *fortresses and towers on the wooded hills*.

King Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) is addressed in 2Kings 16:1-20, 17:1, and 2Chronicles 28:1-27. He, of the four kings who ruled during Isaiah's ministry, was the worst. Based on 2Chronicles 28:2-4, *he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel* (worship of the golden calf), instituted Baal worship, and did not remove *the high places* (worship of Jehovah in the wrong place). Note: *The high places* were worship centers where the Jews set up a miniature holy place and holy of holies and unlawfully offered sacrifices that should have been offered in Jerusalem. Jehovah was worshipped (it was not idolatrous worship—2Chronicles 33:17), but it was worship that occurred in the wrong geographical location. Because *the high places* "seemed" to make the worship of Jehovah more convenient, it "felt" proper to allow *the high places* to remain. God's word teaches otherwise (Deuteronomy 12:4-11). Obviously, the Scriptures were written so we might filter out what feels right yet breaks God's heart.

It was during Ahaz's reign that *the king of Israel (Pekah)* and *the king of Aram (Rezin)*, Aram being Syria, came against Judah for the purpose of doing away with the house (dynasty) of David (read notes associated with Isaiah 7:6). God intervened due to His promise concerning the perpetual nature of the Davidic throne (2Samuel 7:8-16; 1Chronicles 17:10-14). It was this backdrop that initiated Isaiah's prophecy relating to the *virgin* birth (Isaiah 7:14). Ahaz, however, instead of trusting Jehovah for deliverance from *Pekah* and *Rezin*, aligned himself with the Assyrians. After *Assyria* overthrew the Syrian capital of *Damascus*, Ahaz went so far as to order the high *priest* in Jerusalem to build a replica of the *altar* he had seen in *Damascus*. He then stationed it inside King Solomon's temple, being so bold (and out of touch with reality) as to have the *priest* to offer the *burnt offering and... meal offering* upon it (2Kings 16:15). *Molech* worship, where children were offered up in *fire* (Jeremiah 32:35), had evidently received a great boost from Ahaz, who, like King Ahab of Israel, was a supporter of foreign deities (2Kings 16:12-13; 2Chronicles 28:1-4). In the end he even ordered *the doors of the temple* shut (2Chronicles 28:24). When the dust settled, however, Ahaz found himself in subjection to the Assyrians, a domination that continued into King Hezekiah's reign.

King Hezekiah (715-686) is addressed in 2Kings 16:20, 18:1-20:21, and 2Chronicles 29:1-32:33. *Hezekiah* was a godly king and is described by God as the greatest king to rule over God's people, even greater than David (2Kings 18:5). He removed *the high places*, something that even Uzziah and Jotham failed to do, and did away with the evil practices introduced to the southern kingdom through his father Ahaz. He *cleansed* the temple of idolatry and reinstated the temple service according to God's law. He even invited the Jews living in the northern kingdom (who lived in territories not destroyed by the Assyrians) to come to *Jerusalem* to worship.