

LIVING GODS WILL

Prophet of God

ISAIAH



Prophet Isaiah by Antonio Balestra

Born: 8th Century BC, Judah

Died: 7th Century BC, Jerusalem

Isaiah was a prophet of **God**.

Isaiah warned Israel of the coming Assyrian overthrow.

Isaiah verbally attacked the ruling classes in defense of the people.

Isaiah preached belief in **Yahweh** and repentance to godless people.

The Prophet **Isaiah** died a martyr's death. It is believed that he died in the reign of King Manasseh. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, **Isaiah** had been found hiding in a cedar tree. The tree was cut in half, **sawing Isaiah into half as well**.

Isaiah, whose name means "**Yahweh is salvation**," is best known for writing the book that bears his name in the Old Testament.

His writings are especially significant for the prophecies he made about the coming Messiah, hundreds of years before **Jesus** was born (**Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7, 11:2-4; 53:4-7, 9, 12**).

Matthew quotes **Isaiah** when describing **John the Baptist's** ministry (**Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3**), and when **Jesus** moved to Galilee to start His ministry, **Isaiah's** prophecy was fulfilled (**Matthew 4:13-16; Isaiah 9:1-2**).

Jesus quotes **Isaiah's** prophecy when speaking in parables (**Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:14-15**), and the apostle Paul also makes reference to the same prophecy when he is in Rome (**Acts 28:26-27**).

When **Jesus** reads from **Isaiah** (**Isaiah 61:1-2**) in the synagogue at Nazareth, He amazes many of the Jews by claiming the prophecy is fulfilled in Him (**Luke 4:16-21**).

It is also interesting to note that the Gospels quote more from **Isaiah's** writings than from any other of the Old Testament prophets.

Little is written about **Isaiah** the man. We know that he was the son of Amoz and that he married and had sons of his own (**Isaiah 1:1; 7:3; 8:3**).

Though **Isaiah's** recognition as a great prophet is indicated in the books of the Kings and Chronicles, it is also probable that he was a priest, as his calling from **God** took place in the temple (**Isaiah 6:4**), an area reserved only for priests.

The anointing he receives at his calling is similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 1:9; Isaiah 6:7**).

Along with his contemporary, the prophet Micah, **Isaiah** served the southern kingdom of Judah under the reigns of four kings. At the time of **Isaiah's** ministry, Judah was a sinful and unjust nation.

Nevertheless, **Isaiah** believed that Judah was **God's** chosen nation and they would be vindicated by **God**. With support from Micah and the godly King Hezekiah, their enemies were held at bay and a revival swept through the nation of Judah (**2 Kings 19:32-36; 2 Chronicles 32:20-23**).

Many commentators describe **Isaiah** as Judah's evangelist because he worked tirelessly to turn the people back to **God**.

There were many highs and lows in **Isaiah's** life. His faithfulness to **God** was rewarded with some amazing miracles.

In answer to **Isaiah's** prayer, **God** moved the sun back ten steps as a sign to King Hezekiah that **God** would add a further 15 years to Hezekiah's life (**2 Kings 20:8-11; 2 Chronicles 32:24**).

Yet **Isaiah** spent three years stripped naked and barefoot, in obedience to **God**, as a "sign and wonder" against the Egyptians (**Isaiah 20:2-4**). His contemporary, Micah, did likewise (**Micah 1:8**), though it we are not told for how long.

It is in examining a man's heart that we can learn what kind of a man he is, and **Jesus** said it is from the overflow of a man's heart that he speaks (**Matthew 12:34**).

Aram and Israel Ally Against Judah

We first find **Isaiah** involved in historical events during the reign of Ahaz, shortly after 735 B.C.E.

At that time, according to the Book of Kings, "**King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel (the northern Israelite nation) advanced on Jerusalem (the capital of Judah, the southern Israelite nation) for battle. They besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome [him]**" (**2 Kings 16:5**).

The account of this alliance against Judah and Jerusalem is expanded upon in **Isaiah 7:1-16**. Here we learn that the two kings conspire to dethrone Ahaz and replace him with someone called "**son of Tabeel**" (**7:6**).

The reasons for this attack are not stated, though it is generally assumed that Aram and Israel joined as allies against Assyria and moved against Jerusalem in the hopes of overcoming Ahaz's resistance and dethroning him.

Undoubtedly, this was part of a larger anti-Assyrian alliance, in which Tyre and perhaps even Philistia joined in;

but one should not dismiss longtime rivalries between Israel, Aram, and Judah, in particular in light of Judah's expansion into Israel's trans-Jordanian territory of Gilead during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham.

This event may have encouraged Israel to join with Aram in the hopes of weakening Judah.

Isaiah Appeals to King Ahaz

During the period prior to the invasion, **Isaiah** approaches Ahaz, who apparently intends to join forces with Assyria (**2 Kings 16:7-9; Isaiah 7:13, 20**), and delivers several oracles.

The prophet regards Ahaz's action as indicating a lack of faith in divine support, and he also believes that such an attack will not materialize.

In **Isaiah 7:3**, **Isaiah** goes out to the Fuller's Field with his son Shear-Yashuv (meaning "[**only**] a remnant will turn back") and confronts the king with the words:

"Be firm and be calm. Do not be afraid and do not lose heart on account of those two smoking stubs of firebrands, on account of the raging of Rezin and his Arameans and the son of Remaliah.... It shall not succeed, it shall not come to pass.... If you [Ahaz] will not believe, you shall not be established" (7:4-9).

The Prophecy Concerning Immanuel

Shortly, thereafter, the prophet refers to the fact that "**the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son,**" who should be named Immanuel ("**With us is God**") (**7:14**).

It is not clear whether this is to be the prophet's own son or a royal scion; in any case, he predicts that (in a short period of time) before the lad can "**reject the bad and choose the good**" (**7:16**), the danger will pass.

"Pillage Hastens, Looting Speeds"

Another prophecy, probably also from this period of imminent siege, involves the birth of another son to the prophet (whose wife is here designated "**the prophetess**").

This child will be named Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("**pillage hastens, looting speeds**") — a reference to the despoliation of Aram and Israel at the hands of Assyria (**Isaiah 8:1-3**).

In 732 B.C.E., in fact, Assyria invaded and sacked Damascus, the capital of Aram. Thus was Jerusalem saved.

Whatever prompted **Isaiah** to refer to Assyria as the agent of divine wrath against his people is not certain (see **10:5-6**); equally uncertain is the report of a military advance against Jerusalem in **10:27-34**.

Israel Revolts Against Assyria, and Falls

The hegemony of Assyria over the western Asiatic kingdoms refueled the fires of revolt. In the year 724 B.C.E., King Hoshea of Israel decided to discontinue his tribute payments to King Shalmeneser V of Assyria and establish diplomatic ties with Egypt (**2 Kings 17:4**).

This proved disastrous. Shalmeneser V reacted with force and besieged Samaria. Sometime in late summer or early autumn of 722 B.C.E., Samaria buckled under the siege and fell.

Shalmeneser's successor Sargon II repeatedly boasted of destroying Samaria, but it would appear that the city had already fallen. The surviving region was made into an Assyrian province (Samerina).

The upper class was deported to Babylonia and Media (**2 Kings 17:6**), and a new upper class was imported from Babylonia and possibly Syria as well (**2 Kings 17:24**).

It was this great northern destruction that caused **Isaiah's** contemporary Micah to wail:

"Because of this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked! I will lament as sadly as the jackals, as mournfully as the ostriches. For her [the nation's] wound is incurable, it has reached Judah, it has spread to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem" (Micah 1:8-9).

Isaiah Goes Naked

Several years later, in 714 B.C.E., a different revolt broke out in southern Palestine - led by the city of Ashdod. This event is recorded in **Isaiah 20**.

Once again the prophet took an active part, dramatizing the dangerous consequences of impetuous revolt against Assyria.

His symbolic and excessive performance (he went **"naked and barefoot for three years,"** **verse 31**) probably had a greater popular impact than his ongoing oracles to the people of Judah to trust the Lord for victory and not to rely upon the words and weapons of Egypt (**Isaiah 30-32**).

Isaiah's warnings proved true. Sargon II smashed the coalition in 712 B.C.E., and while Judah participated in the event, there was no Assyrian action against her.

Assyria's Siege of Jerusalem

This was not the case, however, during the stormy political events of 701 B.C.E. In response to a widespread revolt in Palestine, Philistia, and Egypt that followed the death of Sargon II (705 B.C.E.), King Sennacherib of Assyria (701-681 B.C.E.) invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem.

Isaiah's Oracle of Deliverance to Hezekiah

Subject to taunts and destruction, King Hezekiah of Judah sought the word of God from **Isaiah** and received a prophecy of the salvation and deliverance of Zion.

This miraculous episode is recorded in **Isaiah 36-38**, but the reprieve did not save Judah from subjugation, tribute, and loss of territory (**2 Kings 18:13-16**). The price of political activism was vassalage, for **Isaiah's** great appeal for trust in **God's** plan was ignored.

Isaiah: Court Prophet and Scribe?

Following these critical events, **Isaiah's** voice fell silent. His direct access to King Ahaz (**Isaiah 7:3-24**), his familiarity with Shevna, the royal chamberlain (**22:15**), and his prominent position during the reign of King Hezekiah, when he was summoned to provide oracles for the city and prayers for the king (**Isaiah 37-38**), suggest that **Isaiah** had some court position—possibly of a scribal nature.

It is of interest, in this regard, that the Chronicler refers to him as a royal historian:

"The other events of Uzziah's reign, early and late, were recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz" (2 Chronicles 26:22).

From this vantage point, he responded to the turns of political power with God's word to him.

It is from **Isaiah's** writings that we learn of his unswerving faithfulness and his complete humility before **God**. He also had great respect from King Hezekiah's court and his peers, which was evident in times of crisis.

Some of the world's greatest art works, music and poetry have come from men who walked closely with **God**, and we can count **Isaiah** among them.

His grasp of the Hebrew language has been likened to that of Shakespeare's English, as we read in **Isaiah** some of the most beautiful writings in the Bible.

Though the book of **Isaiah** was written over 2,500 years ago, it is well worth reading through the entire book, because in it we see much wisdom that still applies to our Christian lives today.

It appears that **Isaiah** was a very private man. When we meet some of today's renowned speakers face to face, we may be disappointed to find they appear somewhat aloof.

However, as with **Isaiah**, we can learn that their ministry is all about pointing people to **God**, not to themselves. And despite his reticence, **Isaiah's** prominence is in the effect his ministry had on the people.

In these last days, we need to make every word we speak count for the kingdom. And from **Isaiah's** lifestyle we learn that, when **God** accomplishes a part of His plan through us, we must ensure that all the glory goes to Him.

In addition, it appears **Isaiah's** ministry was characterized by closeness with other godly men, like Micah and King Hezekiah.

Going it alone can often leave us vulnerable, but when we are united by **God's** Holy Spirit to other members of the body of **Christ** through fellowship and prayer, our ministry is more effective by virtue of the protection others provide.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 12:2 Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' "Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish.

Isaiah 41:13 For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'

Isaiah 45:2 I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel.



The Prophet Isaiah by Michelangelo