

Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2022 12:53 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Isaiah Overview

"All Scripture is breathed by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work!" (II Timothy 3:16-17)

The Phillips translation puts it this way: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment for the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work!"

And, as Kirk Streitmater pointed out last night, the uncovering of the "dead sea scrolls" (in 1948) gives us added confidence that the original Scriptural text--particularly the book of Isaiah--has been miraculously protected by God down through the ages as the authentic and totally reliable Word of God (as we might expect)!

And so we begin our study of Isaiah with confidence that it is inspired, authentic, and the very words of God! Warren Wiersbe has observed (apparently drawing on wisdom of the great Bible teacher, Harry Ironsides) that the book of Isaiah can be viewed as "the Bible in miniature"! There are 66 chapters in Isaiah, and 66 books in the Bible. The 39 chapters of the first part of Isaiah may be compared with the Old Testament with its 39 books, and both focus on God's judgment for sin! While the 27 chapters of the second part of Isaiah may be seen as parallel to the 27 books of the New Testament, with both emphasizing the grace of God!

And, interestingly, the writer of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, has variously been called the "messianic prophet," the "Paul of the Old Testament," and the "prophet's prophet"! Constable (quoting J. Sidlow Baxter) notes that "what Beethoven is in the realm of music, what Shakespeare is in the realm of literature, what Spurgeon was among the Victorian preachers, Isaiah is among the prophets"!

Can hardly wait to get into it!

But, as with all Bible study, we need to see the book of Isaiah in the context of the rest of Scripture, as it fits and flows logically from the books that precede it (as well as follow it!)--and particularly the history of Israel that's recorded, and the scene that's set, particularly from the books of I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles! Noting from this that Isaiah lived and prophesied during the difficult time of a divided kingdom, with both the northern and southern kingdoms on the decline, and in so many ways corrupt and unfaithful to the God who had chosen them to prosper and be a blessing to all the nations! It was also a time of the rise of surrounding nations threatening to destroy them and taking them into exile (which, of course, would happen!), and particularly the Assyrian empire! (And, eventually, Babylonian captivity!)

Isaiah 1:1 says that, during this difficult time, Isaiah received visions from God "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (the southern kingdom) during the reigns of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham,

Ahaz, and Hezekiah. But it all began with Isaiah's dramatic calling from God! Isaiah 6 says that "in the year of King Uzziah's death, he saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train (the fringe of His glorious robe) filling the temple"! And one of His angels calling out: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory!" And it says that "the foundations of the thresholds trembled..." and with Isaiah responding (as only he could): "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then he heard the voice of the Lord telling him to "go and tell this people!" And the "ministry" of Isaiah begins!

Upon a first reading of the book of Isaiah, one might find it fragmented and confusing! Filled with lots of poetry, metaphors, and analogies, along with history and prophecy concerning the present, the near future, and the far future things! Sometimes intermingled! Not always chronological and sometimes difficult to interpret! But there are some "big ideas" which run through the pages of Isaiah which can't be missed or denied! It's God speaking and "judgment" is quickly represented! MacArthur says that "through the mouth of the prophet, Isaiah, God was warning the Jews, and all the world (and us!) of the desolation that occurs when a nation, or people, turn against God"!

But there's also a message of hope and comfort for Israel and for all the world (with this message and outline of things to come illustrated in the various charts that are available on the IBCMob.net website for our study)! God will keep His promises! His covenants with His people! The Abrahamic covenant (in Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; and elsewhere), that through Abraham's descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed! The Davidic covenant (in II Samuel 7:12-17, and elsewhere) that his kingdom would be established forever! And, as Isaiah makes clear (in Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6), "Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a child, and she will call His name Immanuel...and the government will be on His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace..." Wow! No wonder Isaiah is called the "messianic prophet"!

Interestingly, the words from Isaiah are quoted more frequently in the New Testament than from any other prophet! Most significantly, in Luke 4:16-21, by Jesus Himself, when early in His ministry He came to Nazareth and "entered the synagogue on the Sabbath...and opened the book (of Isaiah) and found the place where it was written (in Isaiah 61:1-2), "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor...to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord!" Then closing the book and, with "the eyes of all in the synagogue fixed on Him," saying that "Today the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing!" Wow!

And John the Baptist, in John 1:18-23, saying (to the priests and Levites who tracked him down, while he was baptizing and calling for people to repent) that he was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, to make straight the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said (in Isaiah 40:3)--and the next day, when seeing Jesus, crying out: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

But there's so much more that we'll learn through our study of Isaiah! Including about God! With emphasis on His righteousness, holiness, and justice, in Isaiah 1-39, and His glory,

compassion, and grace in Isaiah 40-66! But, according to Constable, the most outstanding characteristic that his book reveals is His holiness! In fact, the title, "The Holy One of Israel" is used 25 times in Isaiah! And that should affect the way we approach Him, as well as how we choose to live!

And as we proceed through Isaiah, we'll undoubtedly see resemblances to our own world--as well as to our churches (and to ourselves)--of the unfaithfulness and of the corruption and false worship that Isaiah saw in his day! And, more importantly, of God's response! Isaiah 1 begins, in fact, speaking of Israel as a "sinful nation, with people weighed down with iniquity...who have abandoned the Lord..."! And (beginning in verse 10) God likening them to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (can you believe?) and saying that "He had enough of burnt offerings of rams...and took no pleasure in the blood of bull, lambs or goats..."! Then in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Then in Isaiah 24:20--"The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it!" See the connection? And it goes on and on!

But there's hope! In Isaiah 1:18 (our memory verse for next week, by the way), the prophet writes, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land..."! And you'll find many other verses of hope and comfort, well worth underlining in your Bible and committing to memory! For example:

- Isaiah 12:2--"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation!"
- Isaiah 26:3--"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee!" (KJV)
- Isaiah 40:31--"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary!" Ready for this? Next week, Isaiah 1!

May God bless your week!

Lowell