

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

Last night, we met together (on Zoom!) to take a look back at our study of the first 39 chapters of the Book of Isaiah--and what a wonderful study it's been! A book of prophecy, by (perhaps) the greatest of all prophets, whose words were inspired by the Living God!

II Peter 1:19-20 says: "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God!"

Isaiah wrote about the "visions he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (during the 53-year period from 740 to 686 B.C.), and how he instructed "the heavens and earth to listen--for the Lord speaks"!

MacArthur describes it as "a courtroom scene in which the Lord is the plaintiff and the nation of Israel is the defendant! Instead of responding to God's ultimate care and provision for them, these people have failed to give Him the loving obedience that is His due!"

And so, the book of Isaiah, and particularly the first 39 chapters, is basically one of judgment for the people He called to influence the whole world for good, but also for the people of the surrounding nations and the world at large! But then, at some point, for blessing as well! "Judgment is coming" (first 39 chapters), but "glory will follow" (final 27 chapters)! And we find that with all the judgment prophesied, even in the first 27 chapters, it is interspersed with promises of deliverance and hope, "in a day to come"! For the coming of the Messiah! The Savior! Who came through a descendant of Abraham, through whom "the whole world would be blessed"!

Paul Shockley, professor of Bible at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston, wrote that "the purpose of Isaiah is to display God's glory and holiness through the judgment of sin and His deliverance and blessing of a righteous remnant. The central themes include humanity's sinfulness and God's holiness, glory, righteous judgment, divine deliverance, blessing, and commitment to Israel's remnant!"

Philip Kayser, in his Biblical commentary, states that "this wonderful book displays not only the depravity of man in need of grace, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but virtually every doctrine found in the Bible! Its eschatology gives faith and hope to persevere! Its judgments motivate us to influence culture with grace and law! In sum, it is a book needed for transformation!"

Harry Ironside viewed it as "the Bible in miniature"! How "ironic" that there are 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah, just like 66 books in the Bible! With the first 39 chapters resembling the 39 books of the Old Testament, with its focus on the Law of God and judgment for sin! And the final 27 chapters, like the 27 books of the New Testament, with its emphasis on God's grace and mercy, and redemption for sin!

And it's quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament prophecy!

No wonder it is often call "the Gospel according to Isaiah"! Or that Isaiah is referred to as "the Messianic prophet," or "the Paul of the Old Testament"! Or the Shakespeare of the prophets"!

Constable (quoting J. Sidlow Baxter) writes 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"!

Interestingly, Isaiah doesn't share his calling and commissioning until Isaiah 6! Where he writes that "he saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up...with the fringes of his robe filling the temple...and an angel calling out, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of host, the whole world is full of His glory"! Then a voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me!' And He said, 'Go and tell this people"!

And with his calling, a warning that the "hearts of the people would be insensitive" to his message, "their ears dull, and their eyes dim"! (Jesus would later make reference to these very words, in John 12:38-42, in explaining to His disciples why He spoke in parables!)

Wiersbe writes that Isaiah was called to live and serve "in momentous days of international upheaval, when nations were rising and falling... and yet "moved with fearless dignity through the chaos of his days"!

Yet what wondrous and amazing prophecies to render and wonderful promises to claim! Including:

- Prophecies that would be fulfilled during his time (like captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, and deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, king of Assyria)!
- Prophecies that would be fulfilled during Judah's exile in Babylon, including the return of a remnant to Jerusalem!
- Prophecies that would be fulfilled up to, or during the time of the first coming of Christ, such as the coming of one to "prepare the way" (John the Baptist), and the "sign of the virgin who would be with child and bear a son and call His name 'Immanuel"!
- And all the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled "in the last days" with the coming Tribulation, the second coming of Christ, and the Millennial kingdom, and more (much of which is still to come in our study)!

And think of all the great "invitations" and promises for us to claim in the book of Isaiah, including some of your (an my) favorites:

- Isaiah 1:18--"Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool"!
- Isaiah 26:3--"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee!"! (KJ version!)
- Isaiah 40:28-31 (in a study still to come)--"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired! His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!"

And so much more!

How big was Isaiah's God? How big is our God?

He's holy and just! Compassionate! Sovereign! He judges sin! He keeps His promises! His Word is true! He's coming again! Every eye shall see Him!

Thank God for Isaiah! We'll return to it in September!

Meanwhile, stay in, and pay attention to, the Word, men!

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