

good
NEWS BIBLE

The book of

ISAIAH

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Isaiah

The prophet to the land of Judah

What's it about? Isaiah was a prophet who lived in the eighth century BC. He had an astounding vision of God at the start of his work (chapter 6). He told the people of Judah what God wanted them to hear. Sometimes it was good, but much of the time it was a difficult message to pass on.

Who wrote it? The book describes itself as 'the messages about Judah and Jerusalem which God revealed to Isaiah son of Amoz', but some scholars think there might have been other authors, as parts of the book are about much later events.

Why read it? In keeping with the rest of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah records the faithlessness of God's people and the faithfulness of God in sticking by them. Isaiah speaks about injustice, an end to war and how only God can stop people from destroying themselves.

What's it to me? Isaiah isn't just speaking about the problems of people who lived thousands of years ago. Parts of his prophecy can be interpreted to tell of a king to come, a suffering servant – Jesus.

Chapter 1

¹This book contains the messages about Judah and Jerusalem which God revealed to Isaiah son of Amoz during the time when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah.

God Reprimands his People

²The LORD said, "Earth and sky, listen to what I am saying! The children I brought up have rebelled against me.

³Cattle know who owns them, and donkeys know where their master feeds them. But that is more than my people Israel know. They don't understand at all."

⁴You are doomed, you sinful nation, you corrupt and evil people! Your sins drag you down! You have rejected the LORD, the holy God of Israel, and have turned your backs on him.

⁵Why do you keep on rebelling? Do you want to be punished even more? Israel, your head is already covered with wounds, and your heart and mind are sick.

⁶From head to foot there is not a healthy spot on your body. You are covered with bruises and sores and open wounds. Your wounds have not been cleaned or bandaged. No ointment has been put on them.

⁷Your country has been devastated, and your cities have been burnt to the ground. While you look on, foreigners take over your land and bring everything to ruin.

⁸ Jerusalem alone is left, a city under siege — as defenceless as a guard's hut in a vineyard or a shed in a cucumber field.

⁹ If the LORD Almighty had not let some of the people survive, Jerusalem would have been totally destroyed, just as Sodom and Gomorrah were.

¹⁰ Jerusalem, your rulers and your people are like those of Sodom and Gomorrah. Listen to what the LORD is saying to you. Pay attention to what our God is teaching you.

¹¹ He says, "Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering to me? I have had more than enough of the sheep you burn as sacrifices and of the fat of your fine animals. I am tired of the blood of bulls and sheep and goats.

¹² Who asked you to bring me all this when you come to worship me? Who asked you to do all this tramping about in my Temple?

¹³ It's useless to bring your offerings. I am disgusted with the smell of the incense you burn. I cannot stand your New Moon Festivals, your Sabbaths, and your religious gatherings; they are all corrupted by your sins.

¹⁴ I hate your New Moon Festivals and holy days; they are a burden that I am tired of bearing.

¹⁵ "When you lift your hands in prayer, I will not look at you. No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood.

¹⁶ Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil ¹⁷and learn to do

right. See that justice is done — help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.”

¹⁸The LORD says, “Now, let’s settle the matter. You are stained red with sin, but I will wash you as clean as snow.^a Although your stains are deep red, you will be as white as wool.^b ¹⁹If you will only obey me, you will eat the good things the land produces.

²⁰But if you defy me, you are doomed to die. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

The Sinful City

²¹The city that once was faithful is behaving like a whore! At one time it was filled with righteous people, but now only murderers remain.

²²Jerusalem, you were once like silver, but now you are worthless; you were like good wine, but now you are only water.

²³Your leaders are rebels and friends of thieves; they are always accepting gifts and bribes. They never defend orphans in court or listen when widows present their case.

²⁴So now, listen to what the LORD Almighty, Israel’s powerful God, is saying: “I will take revenge on you, my enemies, and you will cause me no more trouble.

^a *sin, but... snow; or sin; do you think I will wash you as clean as snow?*

^b *Although your... wool; or Your stains are deep red; do you think you will be as white as wool?*

²⁵I will take action against you. I will purify you just as metal is refined, and will remove all your impurity.

²⁶I will give you rulers and advisers like those you had long ago. Then Jerusalem will be called the righteous, faithful city.”

²⁷Because the LORD is righteous, he will save Jerusalem and everyone there who repents.

²⁸But he will crush everyone who sins and rebels against him; he will kill everyone who forsakes him.

²⁹You will be sorry that you ever worshipped trees and planted sacred gardens. ^c ³⁰You will wither like a dying oak, like a garden that no one waters.

³¹Just as straw is set on fire by a spark, so powerful people will be destroyed by their own evil deeds, and no one will be able to stop the destruction.

Chapter 2

Everlasting Peace

¹This is the message which God gave to Isaiah son of Amoz about Judah and Jerusalem:

² In days to come
the mountain where the Temple stands
will be the highest one of all,
towering above all the hills.

^c *sacred gardens*: People believed that dedicating a garden to a fertility god would cause him to bless their crops.

Many nations will come streaming to it,

- 3 and their people will say,
“Let us go up the hill of the LORD,^d
to the Temple of Israel's God.

He will teach us what he wants us to do;
we will walk in the paths he has chosen.

For the LORD's teaching comes from Jerusalem;
from Zion he speaks to his people.”

- 4 He will settle disputes among great nations.
They will hammer their swords into ploughs
and their spears into pruning knives.
Nations will never again go to war,
never prepare for battle again.

⁵Now, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light
which the LORD gives us!

Arrogance will be Destroyed

⁶O God, you have forsaken your people, the descendants
of Jacob! The land is full of magic practices from the east
and from Philistia.^e The people follow foreign customs.

⁷Their land is full of silver and gold, and there is no end
to their treasures. Their land is full of horses, and there is no
end to their chariots.

⁸Their land is full of idols, and they worship objects that
they have made with their own hands.

^d *hill of the LORD*: Mount Zion, the hill in Jerusalem on which the Temple was built.

^e Probable text *The land... Philistia*; Hebrew unclear.

⁹Everyone will be humiliated and disgraced. Do not forgive them, LORD!

¹⁰They will hide in caves in the rocky hills or dig holes in the ground to try to escape from the LORD's anger and to hide from his power and glory!

¹¹A day is coming when human pride will be ended and human arrogance destroyed. Then the LORD alone will be exalted.

¹²On that day the LORD Almighty will humble everyone who is powerful, everyone who is proud and conceited.

¹³He will destroy the tall cedars of Lebanon and all the oaks in the land of Bashan.

¹⁴He will level the high mountains and hills, ¹⁵every high tower, and the walls of every fortress.

¹⁶He will sink even the largest and most beautiful ships.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸Human pride will be ended, and human arrogance will be destroyed. Idols will completely disappear, and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.

¹⁹People will hide in caves in the rocky hills or dig holes in the ground to try to escape from the LORD's anger and to hide from his power and glory, when he comes to shake the earth.

²⁰When that day comes, they will throw away the gold and silver idols they have made, and abandon them to the moles and the bats.

²¹ When the LORD comes to shake the earth, people will hide in holes and caves in the rocky hills to try to escape from his anger and to hide from his power and glory.

²² Put no more confidence in mortals. What are they worth?

Chapter 3

Chaos in Jerusalem

¹ Now the Lord, the Almighty LORD, is about to take away from Jerusalem and Judah everything and everyone that the people depend on. He is going to take away their food and their water, ²their heroes and their soldiers, their judges and their prophets, their fortune tellers and their statesmen, ³their military and civilian leaders, their politicians and everyone who uses magic to control events.

⁴ The LORD will let the people be governed by immature boys.

⁵ Everyone will take advantage of everyone else. Young people will not respect their elders, and worthless people will not respect their superiors.

⁶ A time will come when the members of a clan will choose one of their number and say to him, "You at least have something to wear, so be our leader in this time of trouble."

⁷ But he will answer, "Not me! I can't help you. I haven't any food or clothes either. Don't make me your leader!"

⁸Yes, Jerusalem is doomed! Judah is collapsing! Everything they say and do is against the LORD; they openly insult God himself.

⁹Their prejudices will be held against them. They sin as openly as the people of Sodom did. They are doomed, and they have brought it on themselves.

¹⁰The righteous will be happy,^f and things will go well for them. They will be able to enjoy what they have worked for.

¹¹But evil people are doomed; what they have done to others will now be done to them.

¹²Moneylenders oppress my people, and their creditors cheat them.

My people, your leaders are misleading you, so that you do not know which way to turn.

The LORD Judges his People

¹³The LORD is ready to state his case; he is ready to judge his people.^g

¹⁴The LORD is bringing the elders and leaders of his people to judgement. He makes this accusation: "You have plundered vineyards, and your houses are full of what you have taken from the poor.

¹⁵You have no right to crush my people and take advantage of the poor. I, the Sovereign LORD Almighty, have spoken."

^f Probable text *The righteous will be happy*; Hebrew *Say to the righteous*.

^g Some ancient translations *his people*; Hebrew *the peoples*.

A Warning to the Women of Jerusalem

¹⁶The LORD said, “Look how proud the women of Jerusalem are! They walk along with their noses in the air. They are always flirting. They take dainty little steps, and the bracelets on their ankles jingle.

¹⁷But I will punish them — I will shave their heads and leave them bald.”

¹⁸A day is coming when the Lord will take away from the women of Jerusalem everything they are so proud of — the ornaments they wear on their ankles, on their heads, on their necks, ¹⁹and on their wrists. He will take away their veils ²⁰and their hats; the magic charms they wear on their arms and at their waists; ²¹the rings they wear on their fingers and in their noses; ²²all their fine robes, gowns, cloaks, and purses; ²³their revealing garments, their linen handkerchiefs, and the scarves and long veils they wear on their heads.

²⁴Instead of using perfumes, they will stink; instead of fine belts, they will wear coarse ropes; instead of having beautiful hair, they will be bald; instead of fine clothes, they will be dressed in rags; their beauty will be turned to shame!

²⁵The men of the city, yes, even the strongest men, will be killed in war.

²⁶The city gates will mourn and cry, and the city itself will be like a woman sitting on the ground, stripped naked.