

ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah begins a section of the Bible known as the books of the prophets. It was written by a man named Isaiah who lived in Judah and served under four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah wrote the book at different times but it reaches from roughly 739–681 BC.

The book focuses heavily on the sins of the nation, while also foretelling of the coming Christ. In fact, Isaiah shares the broadest picture of the Messiah of any book. It's a coexistence of judgment and salvation, and it declares hope in a time of darkness.

The book is often divided into the following three sections:

Judgment and Salvation (Ch. 1-39)

At the time of this book, both Judah and Israel had deviated from serving the One True God. God called Isaiah to be a prophet during this turbulent time to point people back to their Creator. Throughout these chapters, we find God's call to judgment for a people who had turned away from Him, but also His plan to restore them to Him.

Remove the Dross (1:22-26)

In Isaiah 1, the prophet had a vision and in verse 22, God declares

,"Your silver has become dross to be destroyed, your beer is diluted with water."

We all struggle with something; we're not perfect. There is something unlovely in all of us, and chances are, more than one. Our silver has become dross and without intervention, it leads to destruction.

But God doesn't leave us to such destructive ends. If we choose to follow Him and allow Him

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to work within, God can remove such things and purify us from the unrighteousness. John 15 says that He is the gardener and tells us in verse 2, *“Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.”*

We serve a beautiful God who goes to work to pull out the desires of the flesh; He removes what doesn't produce good fruit. But this pruning doesn't come on top of the mountain—it comes in the valley. Isaiah 1:25 says that this process comes when He must turn His hand against us.

This seems a bit harsh, but it's often only when things get hard do we open ourselves up to God's transforming work in our lives. The valleys bring about transformation.

Here I Am (6:1-13).

I love this portion of Isaiah—it's the prophet stepping into God's work. God was looking for someone to send and Isaiah volunteered for the call. He was a man to moved to serve God that before he even knew what the calling was, he offered himself for the call.

A Child Will Be Born (9:6-7).

These are some of the most well known and cited verses about the coming of Christ. It talks about the birth of Jesus and what he will be sent to accomplish.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

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Comfort, Comfort (Ch. 40-55)

These chapters tell of the coming deliverance and restoration of Israel. In fact, chapter 43—the restoration of Israel—is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. God reminds us over and over again in verses 1-6 to “not fear” because He will be with us. Four times God declares “I will” be with you in the difficult times. Not if we go through difficult times, but when. It’s a promise that no matter what we go through. God is with us and there’s no need to fear.

We later see the fall of Babylon, Israel’s journey out of it, and more references to the coming Messiah

The New Heavens and Earth (Ch. 56-66)

In chapter 58 we are given a beautiful and powerful promise from our mighty God. That for those who are truly seeking Him and walking in righteousness, He promises to be there (“Here I am” in verse 9).

Continuing on to chapter 61, we find a sort of declaration for our purpose. I think of it often in my own journey. Verses 1-3,

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.”

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The end of the book promises a great reward for all those who trust God. He proclaims hope for the afflicted and judgment for the evil. *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind”* (65:17).

What We Can Learn

We find such a beautiful prophecy about Christ in this book, and it’s an important piece of literature concerning his coming. But it’s really a powerful description of our need for a Messiah. Sin leads to judgment but Jesus made a way for grace.

Memory Verse

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” Isaiah 26:3