A STUDY GUIDE ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH



THE PRINCE OF THE PROPHETS

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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Ray Reynolds Ph.D.

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INTRODUCTION

Author:

Isaiah identifies himself as the author of this book (Isaiah 1:1, 2:1, 13:1, 37:21). The name Isaiah means "salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation" which is symbolic of his overall message. He is described as "the son of Amoz" (Isaiah 1:1, 2:1, 13:1). He was married and had two sons named Shear-Jashub ("the remnant shall return"-Isaiah 7:3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz ("in-speed-spoil-booty-hastens" - Isaiah 8:3). The names of his children also symbolize his message.

Tradition says that Amoz was a brother of Amaziah, the son of Joash, king of Judah (II Kings 14:1). If that was true, this would make Isaiah a close relative to those who were kings during his lifetime, and would explain his close association with kings and priests and involvement with world affairs. Isaiah lived into the reign of Manasseh, but the Bible does not tell how or when he died. However, Rabbinic traditions tell us that he suffered martyrdom by Manasseh. It was taught that he was challenged by Manasseh on some apparent contradictions, by which Isaiah would give no explanation because he knew Manasseh would not accept it. He hid inside of a cedar tree and Manasseh had the cedar tree sawn in half and the prophet's blood spilled onto the ground. Other legends include death at the hands of the Arabs or speaking an unspeakable name into a tree and magically becoming one with the tree before Manasseh had it cut down.

Date:

Isaiah received his visions in the days of "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Isaiah 1:1). It is believed that the vision of the throne scene which occurred "in the year Uzziah died" (Isaiah 6:1) was the beginning point of his ministry as a prophet (around 740 BC). He prophesied for about fifty years (approximately 740-690 BC).

Theme:

Many scholars refer to Isaiah as the "Prince of the Prophets" because of the size, theme, and dynamic of the book. Others call Isaiah the "Messianic Prophet" because he includes so many prophecies of Jesus. In fact, the New Testament quotes and applies more scriptures from the book of Isaiah than any other Old Testament prophet. However, it is clear from reading the book of Isaiah that his work was not solely to foretell the future but to explain God's judgment upon the people of his day. His goal was to open the eyes of God's people to what they were doing, how God felt about it, and what judgment would come as a result of their actions.

Audience:

Isaiah is one of the unique prophets to be God's spokesman to all of God's people. His message is specifically toward Judah and Jerusalem because of their habitual sin against the Lord. He speaks God's indictment against their sins, urges them to repent, and then foretells of the destruction upon all of the people. He encourages a remnant that they would survive, but that they would still be forced into captivity and would face terrible atrocities.

In the midst of these dire warnings, Isaiah also foretold of a bright future with the coming Messiah and His eternal kingdom. God would never forget the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes of Israel, and David. He would spare the remnant of the nation of Israel in order to bring the Messiah into the world and establish His new kingdom through Him.

Historical Notes:

When Isaiah wrote this book it was a time of great political turmoil for the nation of Judah. Assyria was expanding its empire and decided to attack Israel and Syria. When Judah refused to join a coalition with Israel and/or Syria to resist Assyria, Judah was attacked by both Israel and Syria in retaliation. It seems that Judah was seriously considering an alliance with Assyria for help, but Isaiah encourages the king and the people to trust only in God. King Ahaz of Judah apparently rejected Isaiah's advice and asked Assyria to come to his aid. Assyria accepted and the capital of Israel (Samaria) fell around 722 BC.

The alliance Assyria was short lived because they also wanted to conquer Judah. Therefore, instead of trusting in God Judah began looking to Egyptians for help. Once again, Isaiah counseled the nation to make no alliances but to trust in the Lord. King Hezekiah heeded Isaiah and God rewarded his faith by destroying the Assyrians (Isaiah 36-37). However, in a moment of weakness Hezekiah showed the ambassadors from Babylon (Assyria's enemy) the house of his treasures (Isaiah 39:1-2) which encouraged more greed and pride. This prompted Isaiah to foretell that the king's treasures and his descendants would be taken away to Babylon (Isaiah 39:5-7). With this prophecy as an introduction, in chapters 40-66 Isaiah speaks from the viewpoint of Babylonian exile and prophesies of coming pardon, deliverance, and restoration many years into the future.

Literary Notes:

The book of Isaiah can be outlined and divided, but it should be viewed as a theological unit. It has often been called "The Little Bible" because it has 66 chapters and there are 66 books in the Bible. It is unclear as to if this was done purposely by men who added chapters and verses for assistance in reading the biblical text. There are also some important points to be made in this book. For instance, the phrase "wait upon the Lord" is used eight times. He loves to refer to God as the "Lord of Hosts" (used 62 times) and the "Holy One of Israel" (used 25 times). The latter description is only found six more times in the rest of the Bible.

Contemporaries of the Prophet Isaiah:

There were other prophets in this day to both Israel and Judah. Specifically, we know that Hosea prophesied to Israel (750-725 BC) and Micah spoke to Judah (735-700 BC). They were preceded by Joel, Zechariah, Amos, and Jonah. Following Isaiah's ministry would be the prophets Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Nahum, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Key Verses:

Isaiah 1:18, 2:2-4, 3:12, 5:1, 5:20, 6:1-8, 7:14, 8:20, 9:6-10, 11:1-9, 14:12, 26:3, 40:1-3, 40:28-31, 41:10, 42:1, 43:1, 43:10, 44:6, 48:17, 51:1, 52:13, 53:1-12, 55:1, 55:8-11, 56:9, 59:1-2, 60:1, 64:6, 65:17

Outline of the Book:

- I. The Assyrian Era (**Isaiah 1-39**)
 - A. Prophecies about Judah/Jerusalem (1-12)
 - B. Prophecies about the nations (13-27)
 - C. Prophecies about the true deliver (28-35)
 - D. Historical interlude (36-39)
- II. The Babylonian Era (**Isaiah 40-66**)
 - A. The superiority of God (40-48)
 - B. The suffering servant (49-53)
 - C. The future glory (54-66)

LESSON ONE: THE LORD HELPS HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 1-6) $\,$

I.	UNDERSTANDING THE WEAKNESSES OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 1:1-31) What charges does God bring against Israel? Why?
	What descriptions are given of the nation of Israel?
	What is the purpose of the remnant of Israel?
	How does God feel about worship, service, and prayers of the Israelites? Why?
	How does it make you feel, regarding your worship, when you read this chapter?
II.	CONFRONTING THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 2:1-22) Many believe chapters 2-5 contain Isaiah's early messages. How do you think they were received?
	Where can we find parallel verses of Isaiah 2:2-4 ?
	What New Testament event is foretold here?
	How do we know this is been fulfilled? Explain.
	What New Testament passages teach us that Christians should shine their light to all nations?
III.	ASSESSING THE ARROGANCE OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 3:1-4:6) What would the Lord take away from the Israelites?
	What would He give them in return for their behavior?
	Who is specifically condemned by the Lord? Why? What is their fate?

What can we learn about the remnant who would survive the exile?

How long was Isaiah to proclaim this message from God?

EXPOSING THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 5:1-30)

IV.

V.

LESSON TWO: THE LORD ENCOURAGES HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 7-12)

I. **EXAMINING THE FAITH OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 7:1-25)**

What was the name of Isaiah's firstborn son? Why is his name significant?
Who was the king of Judah at this time? What do we know about him?
What two kings were besieging Jerusalem? Why?
What was Isaiah's message to the king?
What sign would the Lord give to the house of Israel?
What would happen within the time frame of the sign?
What two nations would desolate Judah? How did this happen? Why?
ENCOURAGING THE PERSEVERANCE OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 8:1-22)

II.

What was the name of Isaiah's second son? Why is his name significant?

What would happen before that child was old enough to know his parents?

Why was this desolation coming upon Judah? What specific sin did they commit?

What instruction did God give to Isaiah? Why?

Do you think Isaiah was tempted to consort with mediums and wizards?

What is the significance of the discussion mediums and wizards in this context?

Why was Isaiah instructed to look to the law and the testimony? What does that mean?

III.	EMPHASIZING THE HOPE OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 9:1-10:4)	
	What hope was offered to those who lived in Galilee (northern Israel)?	When would it happen?

What would the Child or Son be called? Why is each term significant?

What would be the nature of His government? Explain.

How would God chasten Israel? Whom would He use? Why?

What specifically had Israel done that angered God? (10:1-4)

IV. COMFORTING THE HEART OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 10:5-34)

How did God view Assyria in His plans? What role would they play? Why?

What would God do to the king of Assyria after the work was finished?

What does the Lord tell His people who live in Zion?

When the king of Assyria would come into Jerusalem, what would he do? What would God do?

V. REALIZING THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL (ISAIAH 11:1-12:6)

What was to come from the roots of Jesse? Why is this significant?

How would He judge? How would He execute judgment?

What do we know about the future kingdom and its peaceful nature?

How can we know the Gentiles will have a place in this future kingdom?

What else can we learn about the Lord's remnant?

LESSON THREE: THE LORD CHALLENGES HIS ENEMIES (ISAIAH 13-18)

I. GOD CHALLENGES THE BABYLONIANS (ISAIAH 13:1-14:28) Why do you think God wanted Isaiah to prophecy about Babylon first? What does Isaiah say is "at hand"? Why does he use this description? What nation would God stir up against Babylon as part of this judgment? How is the destruction of Babylon described? Why is that significant? What is the name associated with the king of Babylon? How is this name associated with a central Bible character? What can we do when we parallel this passage with other passages regarding Satan? II. GOD CHALLENGES THE PHILISTINES (ISAIAH 14:29-43) Why did Philistia receive judgment in the year Ahaz died? What did God plan to do to them? How did He plan to use them? What description is given regarding the Assyrians, their enemies? Why is that important? III. GOD CHALLENGES THE MOABITES (ISAIAH 15:1-16:14) What do we know about the Moabites? Where did they come from? How can we know that these people were truly a thorn to Israel? What was that nation's primary sin?

What would happen within three years?

	What will happen to the remnant of Syria?
	What would happen as a result of this judgment?
	Why were their efforts becoming a heap of ruins?
	What does this judgment teach us about God's fairness?
V.	GOD CHALLENGES THE ETHIOPIANS (ISAIAH 18:1-7) Why is Ethiopia considered to be the land shadowed with buzzing wings?
	What do we know about their power in this day?
	Which nations did they seek out for help?
	What would the Lord do to them?
	Who would bring a present to Mount Zion? Why?

GOD CHALLENGES THE SYRIANS (ISAIAH 17:1-14)

IV.

LESSON FOUR: THE LORD CHALLENGES MORE OF HIS ENEMIES (ISAIAH 19-23)

I.	GOD CHALLENGES THE EGYPTIANS (ISAIAH 19:1-20:6) How is the Lord depicted as coming in judgment upon this nation? Why?
	What two types of ways would God bring judgment upon them?
	How are future blessings described for this nation (also Assyria & Israel)? Why?
	How did Isaiah serve as a sign against Egypt and Ethiopia?
	What did God command him to do for three years? What did this symbolize?
II.	GOD CHALLENGES THE ALLIES OF THE BABYLONIANS (ISAIAH 21:1-10) What is significant about the allies of the Babylonians in the wilderness of the sea?
	Who are they? Do we know? Why are they important?
	What two nations would be used to judge them?
	How was this prophecy fulfilled? When did it happen?
	What other prophet foretells of this event in great detail?
III.	GOD CHALLENGES THE EDOMITES (ISAIAH 21:11-12) What do we know about the Edomites? Where did they come from?
	Why were they enemies of God and the Israelites?

How would God deal with them?

IV.	What do we know about the Arabians? Where did they come from?
	Why were they enemies of God and the Israelites?
	How would God deal with them?
V.	GOD CHALLENGES THE JUDEANS (ISAIAH 22:1-25) What is significant about the Valley of Vision?
	How would this city be defeated?
	Why would God not protect the city?
	What specific individual was called out for judgment? Why?
	Who would replace him? What do we know about his replacement?
VI.	GOD CHALLENGES THE TYRIANS (ISAIAH 23:1-18) How would others react to the fall of this city?
	How do we know this happened in history? What are the facts?
	What nation would bring this destruction to this city?
	How long would this city be forgotten?
	Why is that number significant?

LESSON FIVE: THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES (ISAIAH 24-27)

I. THE ENDURANCE OF GOD (ISAIAH 24:1-23) What grave and graphic terms are used to describe God's judgment? What will the remnant do after the city is destroyed? Can anyone escape this judgment? Explain. What does this judgment scene tell us about human pride? When the earth is shaken, and the moon and sun are disgraced, what will the Lord do? What can we learn from this chapter about the nature and work of God? Why do people fear men more than they fear God? What can we learn about God's consistency? Why do people doubt God and the promises He has made? II. THE HOPE OF GOD'S PEOPLE (ISAIAH 25:1-12) What do we find Isaiah doing in this chapter? Why? What will the Lord do in His holy mountain? Why? What will be said in the day of this great celebration? What nation is typically called out for its pride?

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How would these verses give Israel great hope for the future?

How can we find this hope?

THE CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROMISES (ISAIAH 26:1-27:1) What will be sung in that day in the land of Judah? What is said of those who trust in the Lord? What is the attitude of those who wait upon the Lord? Why does Isaiah seem to be confident in the Lord? Why does he have such faith? How can we learn to have faith like Isaiah? What does Isaiah counsel the people to do when the Lord begins His judgment? Who would the Lord punish in that day? What description is given of them? THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S JUDGMENT (ISAIAH 27:2-13) What will be sung on this appointed day? How was Israel's judgment different from the nations that struck it? What would happen to the fortified city of Babylon? How many times does he mention the destruction of Babylon? Why? Why is it significant to note that the Lord would bring the people together? What do we know about the restoration during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah?

What would happen to the temple? City? Walls? People?

Why is it important to learn the rest of this story?

III.

IV.

LESSON SIX: THE LORD JUDGES HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 28-34)

I. THE PRIDE OF MAN (ISAIAH 28:1-29)

II.

	What is the purpose of the "woes" upon Ephraim?
	Who is Lord's crown of glory and diadem of beauty? Explain.
	What do we know about the religious leaders of this day?
	What do we know about the rulers of this day?
	What is the meaning of the covenant described? What would happen to them?
	What would the Lord lay in Zion? Why?
	Who is this chief cornerstone? How can we know?
7	THE HEART OF MAN (ISAIAH 29:1-12) What unique name is given Jerusalem in this context? Why?
	What would God do to the city? Why is this happening?
	What would happen to those nations who fight against them? How would this happen?

What can we learn about the remnant and the restoration of Israel in this chapter?

What will happen to those who try to hide their counsel from the Lord?

What caused the blindness of so many at this time?

What did the future hold for the house of Jacob?

III. THE FOOLISHNESS OF MAN (ISAIAH 30:1-33) Who did the rebellious children of Israel put their trust in? What nation? Why? What is so significant about this nation? What would God do for those who trusted Him? What nation will be beaten down by God? Why mention this again? IV. THE PLANNING OF MAN (ISAIAH 31:1-32:20) Why was it foolish for the people to trust in Egypt and her chariots? Who would defend Jerusalem from the Assyrians? How would Assyria fall? What would happen? What do we know about the righteous King and His kingdom? What would follow the pouring out of God's Spirit? What would be the result of this justice and righteousness? V. THE JUDGMENT OF MAN (ISAIAH 33:1-34:17) Why was it so hard for the faithful to look to the Lord for deliverance and salvation?

What will provide stability and the strength of salvation to God's people?

What will happen in Jerusalem? When would this be fulfilled?

What can we learn about the sovereignty of God in this chapter?

When the Lord brings His judgment on Zion, who will be afraid, and who will be secure?

LESSON SEVEN: THE LORD SAVES HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 35-39)

I. THE REDEMPTION OF THE REMNANT (ISAIAH 35:1-10)

Why does humanity struggle with the sovereignty of God?

How is the sovereignty of God revealed in this section of Scripture?			
What has God done for Zion?			
What has God done for Zion:			

How will the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion? What are they doing? Why?

II. THE TRIALS OF THE REMNANT (ISAIAH 36:1-22)

What king came to the fortified cities of Judah and took them? Whom did he send?

What did he call upon Jerusalem to do? Why?

What was his claim? Who sent him?

What did the king of Assyria promise if they made peace with him?

III. THE STRENGTHENING OF THE REMNANT (ISAIAH 37:1-38)

Whom did Hezekiah send as his representatives to ask for his prayers? Why?

Why did the king of Assyria threaten Hezekiah?

What can we learn about the king's deceptive spirit? What did he do?

Why did Hezekiah go to the house of the Lord and pray to the Lord?

What did the Lord tell Hezekiah? Explain.

What happened to the king of Assyria? Where did this happen?

THE LAMENTING OF THE REMNANT (ISAIAH 38:1-22) What do we know about Hezekiah's sickness?
What did Hezekiah do to prepare for his death? Why?
What sign was given to the king that he would be healed?
What was the first thing Hezekiah did when he recovered from his sickness?
What medicinal remedy did Isaiah prescribe for the king in his sickness? Explain.
THE ARROGANCE OF THE REMNANT (ISAIAH 39:1-8) Who came to visit Hezekiah after he recovered from his sickness?
Why did they come? What did they bring for the king?
What did Hezekiah show these people? Why?
What did Isaiah tell Hezekiah would happen as a result?
What good did Hezekiah see in Isaiah's prophecy?
Why was he not fearful of this judgment? Explain.

What does this story tell us about Hezekiah's true character?

IV.

V.

LESSON EIGHT: THE LORD UNDERSTANDS HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 40-48)

I. GOD COMFORTS HIS PEOPLE (40:1-31)

How could Isaiah sp	eak words of	comfort to	God's	people?
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What comfort is there in knowing your sins will be forgiven and warfare will end?

What qualities will be prominent when the Lord comes again?

How does Isaiah describe the greatness of God?

II. GOD BEFRIENDS HIS PEOPLE (41:1-29)

What assertion does God make about the nations? Whom is he referencing?

How would the nations try to find comfort? Would this help them?

Why should Israel not fear these nations? Explain.

What can we learn about the relationship between God and His people?

How does the Lord show His care for Israel? Why is this important?

III. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PEOPLE (42:1-25)

Who else would the Suffering Servant bless? Why?

What does God tell us about His glory?

What does the Lord promise to do for those who were spiritually blind and deaf?

How are these things fulfilled in the New Testament?

Why did Israel rob and plunder? Did they deserve God's judgment? Explain.

IV. GOD RELIEVES HIS PEOPLE (43:1-44:28)

What did God promise to do for Israel? Why?

Who were God's witnesses? How were they witnesses?

What did God promise regarding Babylon? Why?

What evidence verifies that God is the only true God? Explain.

V. GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION FOR HIS PEOPLE (45:1-46:13)

Whom does God promise to us to deliver Israel from exile?

What is the significance of this prophecy? Explain.

How will the descendants of Israel be justified?

How were the worship of idols affecting the Israelites? Explain.

VI. GOD'S FUTURE FOR HIS PEOPLE (47:1-15)

What did the Lord promise to do to Babylon? Why?

Why was God so angry with the Babylonians?

What specific things do the Babylonians trust in? Why?

VII. GOD'S PROMISE FOR HIS PEOPLE (48:1-22)

How had Israel failed in their faithfulness to the Lord?

Why did God refuse to totally wipe out Israel? Why leave a remnant?

How does Isaiah 48:16 confirm the Godhead (the Trinity)? Where else in Scripture?

What assurance is given to the people by God? Why?

LESSON NINE: THE LORD REDEEMS HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 49-57)

I.	THE LORD BRINGS HOPE TO HIS PEOPLE (49:1-26) Who is the Suffering Servant in this section? How can we know?
	Who will worship the Suffering Servant? Why?
	How will the Suffering Servant comfort God's people?
	How will people know their Savior and Redeemer?
II.	THE LORD BRINGS COMFORT TO HIS PEOPLE (50:1-11) Why were the exiles and refugees rebuked?
	Had they suffered because the Lord had forgotten them? Explain.
	Who will help the Servant of God when He suffers abuse? How? Why?
	Whom can we rely on? How can we know this?
III.	THE LORD BRINGS FOCUS TO HIS PEOPLE (51:1-23) Where are the righteous encouraged to look for an example? Why?
	What specific things does God promise for Zion?
	What does God promise to do with His salvation and righteousness?
	How does the Lord respond to Isaiah's plea? Why?
	Has Jerusalem fallen asleep? Explain.

How will God plead the cause for His people?

IV. THE LORD BRINGS RELIEF TO HIS PEOPLE (52:1-12)

Why does God make promises and speak directly to the people this time?

What vision does Isaiah have regarding those watching for redemption?

What are the people of Israel commanded to do? Why?

V. THE LORD BRINGS SALVATION TO HIS PEOPLE (52:13-54:17)

What is the fate of the Suffering Servant? Why?

How will the Suffering Servant impact nations around the world?

Will everyone believe in the Suffering Servant? Explain.

What descriptions are given regarding the suffering of God's servant?

How does Isaiah describe the splendor of the new kingdom?

VI. THE LORD BRINGS COMMUNION TO HIS PEOPLE (55:1-13)

What is offered to those who thirst and have no money? Why?

What is the significance of an everlasting covenant?

What would happen if people called on the name the Lord?

VII. THE LORD DISCERNMENT TO HIS PEOPLE (56:1-57:21)

Who is given a place in the house of the Lord? Why?

Who is blamed for the downfall of God's people?

What grievous sins are listed here? Why? Are they committed today by God's people?

Who was going to possess the land and inherit God's holy mountain?

LESSON TEN: THE LORD BLESSES HIS PEOPLE (ISAIAH 58-66)

I.	THE HONOR OF GOD (58:1-14)	

II.

III.

Why did God despise the fasting of His people?
How is this assessment similar to what has already been stated in Isaiah's prophesy?
What is God really looking for? Why? Explain.
What lessons can we learn from this today? How can we give God honor?
THE MERCY OF GOD (59:1-21) Was the Lord ignoring their prayers? Explain.
What sins are laid at their feet? Were they guilty? Why?
What does Isaiah do for Israel? How does he work as a mediator?
How does the Lord react to Isaiah's humbleness?
THE COMMUNITY OF GOD (60:1-22) For what purpose has God allowed His light to shine?
How are the Gentiles blessed? Why?
In what ways are the rules reversed between the people of God and their oppressors? Why
What does God promise for His people?
How can the people be restored to righteousness?

When does the Lord promise to restore His people?

IV. THE PERSISTENCE OF GOD (61:1-62:12)

What is to be the purpose of the Anointed One? Explain.

How can God's people know the Lord will keep His promise?

Who will see the work of God? Explain.

How will the name of God's people change? What will they be called?

V. THE PLAN OF GOD (63:1-64:12)

What region will suffer the wrath of God? Why?

What does Isaiah remember about the Lord's past dealings with Israel?

What is the substance of Isaiah's prayer?

What do we know about the condition of Jerusalem and the temple?

VI. THE GRACE OF GOD (65:1-25)

What caused the Lord to reject His people?

What caused the Lord to save His people?

What are some of the blessings God promises for His people?

Why are these descriptions significant? Explain.

VII. THE PROMISE OF GOD (66:1-24)

How does the Lord view those who are poor in spirit? Why?

What does God plan to do with those who tremble before Him?

What does God plan to do with the wicked?