

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, (and according to one tradition the nephew of King Uzziah of Judah,) lived and prophesied in Jerusalem 749-690 B.C. during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was the familiar friend and advisor of the latter two kings. He is often called the Gospel Prophet because of his many predictions about the coming Messiah.

THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH

The people of Judah have been untrue to Jehovah, both in their worship and in their manner of life. God will punish their wickedness by the destruction of their nation at the hands of the Assyrians. Their punishment complete, God will restore a remnant, who will rebuild the nation in greater glory. Jehovah, known as the God of Israel, will come to be known as the one God of all the earth. His Messiah will come to establish His perfect reign.

ISAIAH IS KNOWN FOR

(1) The surpassing beauty of his discourses. Many of them have been woven into the best-loved anthems of the church.

(2) His prophecies of the Messiah. Speaking by inspiration things he could not have known naturally, he wove into the messages of ancient Judah the story of Christ's coming, being born of a virgin, in the line of David; His ministry in Galilee; His suffering and death; and the manner of His burial.

For the Christian, this is one of the most important of Old Testament books. The reader will find himself charmed by its beauty, inspired by its message, humbled by its warnings, and strengthened by its assurances. The Sunday evening sermons will form a series on "The Gospel in Isaiah."

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

Chapters 1	General introduction—the burden of Isaiah.
2-4	Pre-vision of the Christian Age.
5-6	The call of Isaiah to prophesy.
7-12	Events of the league of Israel and Syria against Judah, and of the later Assyrian invasions.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

- 13-23 Prophecies of God's judgment against nations nearby.
- 24-27 God's judgment of the whole earth and establishment of His kingdom.
- 28-39 Prophecies in the reign of Hezekiah; warnings, assurances, and their fulfillment.
- 40-66 Israel's Restoration:
 - The supremacy of God as Lord of all. (40-48)
 - The work of God's faithful Servant. (49-56)
 - Glorious future of the Jewish race. (57-66)

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- "The Burden of Isaiah" (Isa. 1)
- "Who Will Go?" (Isa. 6)
- "The Perfect Government" (Isa. 11:1-9)
- "Prepare Ye The Way of the Lord (Isa. 40:1-5)
- "God's Servant Serves God" (Isa. 53)

Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

- "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:10-17)
- "The Axe That Boasted" (Isa. 10:5-19)
- "Strength for the Journey" (Isa. 40:27-31)
- "He Will Not Fail" (Isa. 42:1-9)
- "Put on Thy Strength" (Isa. 52:1-4)
- "Of Whom Speaketh the Prophet?" (Isa. 53)

QUESTIONS OVER ISAIAH

1. How will Zion be redeemed? (1:27)
2. What name will the child to be born be called? (9:6)
3. How will the idols of Egypt react to the Lord's presence? (19:1)
4. What will God do with death? (25:8)
5. Who invaded Judah in the time of Hezekiah? (36:1)
6. What will be the character of God's chosen servant? (42:1-4)
7. Why was the individual of Isaiah 53 wounded, crushed, and scourged? (53:5)
8. What is God's throne and footstool? (66:1)

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH
THE BURDEN OF ISAIAH
(Isaiah 1)

INTRODUCTION —

Here at the outset, a chapter which introduces and sets the theme for the book. The message is frighteningly appropriate to us.

I. THE DARK PICTURE OF JUDAH'S SIN.

- A. The point of view is that of the sorrowing father of wayward children. — Never, "You're going to hell and I'm glad of it."
- B. Judah has rebelled against, and has not known God—this is the gist.
 - 1. They have gone off after idols.
 - 2. They have continued a formal worship without heart.
- C. The moral sins of Judah are described as the bruises of a drunkard.
 - 1. First, prosperous, cynical, forgetful.
 - 2. Materialistic, lustful, greedy.
 - 3. Dishonest, cynical, lacking in care for the needy.
 - 4. Punished by invasion, oppression, suffering.
 - 5. Still feverish for entertainment (22:12-14).
 - 6. The woes (5:18-23).
 - a. Draw sin as with a rope; bound to it as beast of burden.
 - b. Scornful of God—"Let's see You do some tricks."
 - c. Call evil good and good evil:
Vengeance made a virtue.
(College teacher says skillful cheater will be successful.)
Narcotics business justifies destruction of others for gain.
 - d. Boastful and self-satisfied.
 - e. Mighty in their cups.
 - f. Takers and givers of bribes— influence in business.
- D. A frighteningly familiar picture of almost any mature civilization.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

II. THE FORM OF RELIGION WILL NOT SUFFICE.

- A. The activities here described are the things commanded in the law—Has God changed?—Israel has changed from obedience to form.
- B. “Who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts?”
 - 1. They came like unreasoning beasts—driven by others—coming by habit—fleeing through fear.
 - 2. No system of worship is without danger in this direction—The Roman pageantry. The Protestant testimony meeting.
- C. The things commanded can be used wrongfully. “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (I Cor. 11:27).

III. GOD HAS AN ANSWER—THERE IS HOPE BECAUSE THERE IS GOD.

- A. Come now and let us reason together—God deals as with children.
- B. Chastening in order to salvation.
 - 1. Some are driven away and lost.
 - 2. The remnant are corrected, and become the center of future glories.
- C. Cease to do evil; learn to do well; but moral reform is not enough.
- D. *I will thoroughly purge away thy dross. I will restore thy judges. Zion shall be redeemed.*

CONCLUSION —

God provides the redeemer—This is the Gospel in Isaiah.

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH

WHO WILL GO?

(Isaiah 6)

INTRODUCTION — The chapter preaches its own sermon.

- A. One of those living and growing passages—let it live and grow and bear fruit in us.
- B. For fifty years Uzziah had reigned—one of the greater, stronger, better kings (by tradition cousin of Isaiah).
 - 1. Yet the nation wandered ever farther from the way of God.
 - 2. Perhaps Isaiah asked, "Why doesn't somebody do something?"

I. THE LIFE-FILLING GLORY OF GOD.

- A. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." When the things in which we trust fail, we come to trust in Him (Dittemore).
- B. The picture of glory.
 - 1. High—temple-filling train (no attempt at physical description of God). Circumstances most glorious.
 - 2. About Him the Seraphim—winged creatures. Their attitude and words of reverence. "And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev. 4:8).
- C. Smoke filled the house—symbol of the presence of God. Smoke and thunder at Sinai; pillar of cloud; smoke of the altar.

II. THE CONFESSION AND CLEANSING OF ISAIAH.

- A. Here the mark of the kind of a man God can use: humble, aware of sin.
- B. Hears how the seraphim praise God purely—has he done so? "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also" (James 3:2). "For out of the abundance of the heart

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34).

C. Confession of imperfection, which is sin. Cf. Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

D. "I dwell among a people of unclean lips." — Not in the way of excusing himself, but of sharing their guilt.

E. The act of cleansing.

1. It was not an act of passing over; it was an act of taking away—pain?

2. Fire the symbolic agent of cleansing—cauterizing.

III. THE COMMISSION OF ISAIAH.

A. The Lord has need—"Whom shall I send, and who will go?"

1. The thoughtless in Israel; who will tell them?

2. Is there question that there is need in America today for God's servants? There are sinners, unsaved, unchurched, unloved, and lonely. There are those who should know better who do not know the word of God.

3. Why doesn't somebody do something?

B. The Lord invites and commands. — "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny . . ." (Matt. 16:24).

1. Early Christians obeyed the command—each one considered it his work to preach.

C. "Here am I, Lord, send me"—was this not presumption on Isaiah's part, to choose himself as God's ambassador?

1. God's question—*who will go?*

2. "Enthusiasm and willingness are 90%—they are 99%."

IV. THE RESULT—NOT IN APPARENT SUCCESS, BUT IN SERVICE TO HIM.

The remnant—you invite 100; one comes, thank God; teach a class; one hears and learns.

INVITATION —

The glorious Christ invites— who will hear?

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH
THE PERFECT GOVERNMENT

(Isaiah 11:1-9)

INTRODUCTION — The world-wide interest in perfect government.

- A. Speculation on what government ought to be has a noble heritage.
- B. Plato—A wise man and his friend speculate on what the government should be like.
- C. Sir Thomas More dreams of a perfect government on a far-away island, called Utopia, or nowhere.
- D. They might well have saved their time, and studied instead the picture God gives us, of His perfect government.

I. THE RULER IS PERFECT.

- A. He is God through Christ. "All authority is given unto me . . ." (Matt. 28:18).
 - 1. Pilate testified to His moral perfection.
 - 2. The multitude said early in his ministry, "He doeth all things well" (Mark 7:37).
- B. The Spirit of Jehovah shall be upon Him.
 - 1. The spirit of wisdom and understanding.
 - a. Compare Solomon's plea for wisdom.
 - b. Gains understanding through a perfectly intimate knowledge of man—the man with wounds knows what war is.
 - 2. The spirit of counsel and might.
 - a. He knew how to organize and to inspire His army.
 - b. His might is testified by the results of His work.
 - 3. The spirit of knowledge and fear of Jehovah.
 - a. *Knowledge* in the Old Testament sense—an experience of God. It was knowledge that Jesus had when He chose the Twelve.
 - b. Fear of God—is Old Testament "religion"—which word is not found there. "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Every act of life has religious significance.

II. HIS RULE IS PERFECT.

- A. Does not judge by hearsay and appearances.
 - 1. The worthlessness of hearsay is evident.
 - 2. Appearances—Louise Moorman “saw” a friend smoking—but she believed his word above her own eyes when assured that it was not so.
- B. Brings justice to the poor with righteousness.
 - 1. God is no respecter of persons.
 - 2. Jesus healed and loved the dirty and downcast.
- C. Argues with equity (equalness) for the meek.
 - 1. Pleads the cause for those too bashful to speak for themselves.
 - 2. The world accepts a man at his own valuation, but God knows.
- D. Smites the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
 - 1. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he bringeth unto himself” (Heb. 6:12).
 - 2. Was Jesus wrong in being harsh?—It was the only way to save.

III. HE TRANSFORMS THE WORLD.

- A. Men would try to force others into a mold through pressure.
- B. Christ builds and transforms through an inward force. In the picture of Isaiah there is a *change in nature*.
- C. Hence the government is not a dictatorship, even with a perfect ruler.
 - 1. It is in the truest sense a democracy.
 - a. The citizen chooses or rejects citizenship.
 - b. He is free at any time to reject the rule once chosen.
 - c. He is free at all times to obey or disobey.
 - 2. It is the willing allegiance of brothers to a Father.

CONCLUSION —

Will you join the Hallelujah Chorus to “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”?

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD

(Isaiah 40:1-5; Luke 3:3-6)

INTRODUCTION — We all benefit from roadbuilding.

- A. We have come to our place on roads not built by ourselves.
 - B. Roadbuilding as Isaiah knew it.
 - 1. The way prepared for a king to visit the provinces of his kingdom.
 - 2. The way prepared for an army, led by its king.
 - a. An aggressive, winning army made roads.
 - b. A besieging army built ramps for its siege engines, so a city could be conquered and occupied.
- I. ISAIAH PROMISED A DIVINE DELIVERER-KING (vv. 1-3).
- A. His message directed to a people who had been punished for their sins.
 - 1. By prophetic insight Isaiah addressed the situation of the captives in Babylon two centuries after his time.
 - 2. Their God, "a great King above all the gods," was not limited to Palestine, but would come to Babylon as a rescuer to the outlands of His own realm.
 - 3. The herald-voice announces the coming and commands the preparation.
 - B. Isaiah's message applies to a world, captive to sin and needing a Savior.
 - 1. Isaiah foreshadowed the situation of the Jewish nation seven centuries after his time.
 - 2. Their God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save it. — The Son came from Heaven to earth, as to a part of His created realm.
 - 3. The herald-voice, John the Baptist, announced the coming and prepared for it.
 - C. Isaiah's message applies to our present-day world, sin-bound and needing salvation.
 - 1. The Son approaches the captives by way of the Word.
 - 2. The herald-voice and the preparer is the church, corporately and in person.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

II. ISAIAH'S MESSAGE COMMANDS PREPARATION OF THE WAY (v. 3).

- A. Why prepare the way?
 1. It is necessary in deference to the King.
 2. It is necessary to gain and assure His being received when He comes.
- B. Who prepares the way?
 1. The soldiers and the subjects of the King.
 2. At Jesus' coming it was John the Baptist.
 3. In our time, it is the Christian who lives and speaks in such a way as to make Christ welcome.
- C. How important is the preparation?
 1. The Romans took Masada after building a ramp reaching 200 feet above the plain.
 2. What is it worth, not to destroy a fortress, but to save a soul?

III. ISAIAH'S MESSAGE DESCRIBES THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION (vv. 3-5).

- A. Build in the wilderness, where there is not a way available.
- B. Valleys shall be lifted up. — Every man must be lifted to the consciousness that he is loved and can be saved.
- C. Hills shall be brought low. — The proud and wealthy (Nicodemus?) must see their need as sinful humans.
- D. The crooked must be straightened, the rough places smooth. Straighten things out for:
 1. The one perplexed by creeds.
 2. The one blinded by "hypocrites in the church."
 3. The one bewildered by inequities in this present world.

CONCLUSION —

The Great King approaches to rescue His captive people. In preparation He deserves not less, but infinitely more than the Cyrus and Caesars of old.

PREACHING THROUGH ISAIAH
GOD'S SERVANT SERVES GOD!
(Isaiah 53)

INTRODUCTION — The Servant Songs of Isaiah speak of Christ.

- A. In poetry—imaginative, emotional, rather than precisely definitive, they describe:
 - 1. His gentle manner and world mission (Isa. 42:1-9).
 - 2. His mission and spiritual success (Isa. 49:1-13).
 - 3. His strength and perfection through suffering (Isa. 50:4-11).
- B. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" (Acts 8:34).
 - 1. Israel as a nation was to be God's servant.
 - 2. The prophet was to serve God and the nation.
 - 3. The Messiah was to serve and save the world. Here is the perfect Servant (See Acts 8:34, 35).

I. THE SERVANT DOES NOT SATISFY US (vv. 1-3).
—He stands in stark contrast to all our ideas of supermen!

- A. His beginnings unimpressive by the world's standards.
 - 1. His virgin birth, an offense to many.
 - 2. Nazareth not highly regarded (John 1:46) and even Nazareth rejected Him.
- B. Physical appearance is not the basis of attraction.
 - 1. Jesus' appearance unknown; for any literal description would repel those to whom it contrasted.
 - 2. "Believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:11).
- C. He was a man of sorrows ("Weep, and you weep alone.")
 - 1. He wept, literally, at the grave of Lazarus, and at the gates of Jerusalem.
 - 2. He knew the disappointment of betrayal and denial.
 - 3. Suffering is still wholly unacceptable to preachers of success and happiness.

II. THE SERVANT SAVES US (v. 4-6).

- A. We were wrong in rejection: all this was for us!
- B. He bore our griefs (sickness) and carried our sorrows (pain).
 - 1. It belonged to us, but we could not bear it.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

2. "Him who knew no sin [God] made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21, ASV).
 3. He bore the punishment that makes us whole.
- C. He suffered for our wanderings.
1. We, like sheep, have gone astray.
 2. The Shepherd endured the search; laid down His life for the sheep.

III. THE SERVANT SUFFERS SILENTLY (vv. 7-9; compare I Peter 2:18-24).

- A. What shall He say?
1. That He is innocent? It is known.
 2. That He is hurt? That is evident.
 3. Compare our self-justification, and explanations!
- B. He did finally say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). — This explained it all, and introduces the final thought of the chapter.

IV. THE SERVANT SATISFIES GOD (vv. 10-12).

- A. He was God's provision from the first, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (John 1).
- B. He is God's hope for eternity. "He shall see his seed [posterity], he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (v. 9).
- C. For now, "He shall justify many." — God will attribute righteousness to multitudes who come through Christ.
- D. He is acknowledged as God's beloved Son.
1. Authority and judgment are committed to Him.
 2. Peter said, "[Him] God raised up, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it [death]" (Acts 2:24).
 3. Paul: "God hath highly exalted him, and given him the name that is above every name . . ." (Phil. 2:9).

CONCLUSION —

God's Suffering Servant becomes the coming Judge, "Wherefore we make it our aim . . . to be well-pleasing unto him" (II Cor. 5:9, ASV).