

The Book of Isaiah

by Wayne Goff

"Of all Israel's celebrated prophets, Isaiah is the king. The writings which bear his name are among the profoundest of all literature. One great theme -- salvation by faith -- stamps them all. Isaiah is the St. Paul of the Old Testament."

-- George L. Robinson

INTRODUCTION

The book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters, the first 39 pertain to the period of Assyrian influence while the last 27 pertain to the later period of Babylonian superiority. Hence, the book is called "the little Bible" because its chapters reflect the books of the Bible.

Isaiah contains more Messianic prophecies than all the other prophets and sets the standard for what a prophet's message should be. Many who have never studied Isaiah will readily recognize many of the passages from their New Testament studies. Prophecies concerning John the Baptist, Christ's virgin birth, the Messiah's kingdom, the Lord's miracles ushering in the gospel age, etc. are all in Isaiah!

Furthermore, God magnifies His constant and permanent Word as opposed to that of fleeting humanity with words quoted later by the apostle Peter: *"The voice said, 'Cry out!' And he said, 'What shall I cry?' 'All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever'"* (Is. 40:6-8). A good Bible student recognizes these words more readily from 1 Peter 1:24-25, but Isaiah penned them as he glorified the eternal, omnipotent Jehovah God!

God's words and thoughts are higher than man's, just as the heavens are higher than the earth (Is. 55:8-9)! God's Word shall not return unto Him void any more than the rains from heaven return to the clouds unproductively (Is. 55:9-11)!

Anyone who has an ounce of respect for the Word of God must love and honor the prophecy of Isaiah. Sadly, the contemporaries of Isaiah were not interested in the book any more than some of my brethren today! We live in a fast-paced, time-stretched, materially-filled, microwave society -- so we do not have time to read, study and meditate upon the book of Isaiah. How many of us have delayed a study of Isaiah simply because of its length? I am as guilty as you, dear reader. We think we might enjoy such a study, but do we want to spend six months on its contents?

Isaiah 29:11-12 contains the excuses of those to whom Isaiah spoke and wrote. They claimed they could not understand the vision because it was supposedly "sealed." Others claimed to be illiterate and thus could not read it. God's reply was that they were stubborn, blind and drunk spiritually! I suppose the point is that we make time for the things we really want to do. I hope you and I will take the time over the next three months to let the words of God through Isaiah speak to us. We need the message!

Some might wonder, "What does a book written 2,700 years ago have to do with me?!" Isaiah wrote during a time of wealth, prosperity, and ease -- just like our time. In his lifetime, the nation of Judah fell upon politically difficult and near-disastrous circumstances -- much like we face today. So the circumstances both then and now are amazingly parallel. The eternal, timeless God has a message for mankind that is likewise eternal and timeless. Divine principles never grow outdated; this is our Father's world and He is still in charge.

Others might suggest that Isaiah is too difficult to study, but we have over twenty New Testament fulfillments to point us in the right direction! We can understand the book if we will take the time to learn it. We can teach its fundamental principles to our children, if we care to put in the effort. It's not a matter of ability, brethren, but of desire. Remember, God's Word will not return to Him void, but it will accomplish what He pleases! To the faithful disciple there will be many fruitful rewards; to the careless student there will be nothing gained. This is exactly what God intended!