

### The Major Prophets: Isaiah

<b>The Major Prophets Designation</b>	The adjective “major” is deceiving when distinguishing the Major Prophets from the Minor Prophets. For it leads some to the unnecessary conclusion that the Major Prophets were more significant. They were not. They just wrote more than the Minor Prophets. Thus, “major” relates to volume.
<b>About the Major Prophets</b>	The Major Prophets in the OT are Isaiah, Jeremiah (Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel. Understanding the general timeframe each prophesied will help with understanding the contents of their prophecy. (1) Isaiah – Before the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria (even though he lived in the South). (2) Jeremiah – Before the Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon. (3) Ezekiel – Part of his ministry before the Babylonian Captivity. Part of his ministry during it. (4) Daniel – In Babylon. Consequently, Isaiah is the earliest. Daniel is the latest.
<b>About Isaiah</b>	Isaiah’s name means “God is salvation.” Isaiah served the southern kingdom of Judah under the reigns of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Though little is known about Isaiah as a person, we can put together his profile from the internal contents of his prophecy (2 Kings and 2 Chronicles also). He was married and had two sons. He also had the ear of the kings of Judah. Isaiah was also a priest, for his calling from God took place in the temple (Isaiah 6) in an area only reserved for priests.
<b>About The Book</b>	The Book of Isaiah is extremely lengthy. It contains 66 chapters in totality. It contains, however, two distinct sections. Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66. The themes of both sections couldn’t be any more different in terms of tone. Isaiah 1-39 deals with judgment (with glimmers of grace/comfort), while 40-66 deal with grace/comfort (with glimmers of judgment). Think of it this way: In 1-39, Isaiah tells the Northern Kingdom of Israel that the Assyrians are going to conquer them. He also tells the Southern Kingdom that the Babylonians will conquer them. Then, in 40-66, he tells them all that God will bring comfort/grace/salvation, ultimately in the form of the one who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Is 53).
<b>Isaiah in a Phrase</b>	God will judge and God will save.
<b>Key Verses</b>	<i>“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Is 7:14)</i>  <i>“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6)</i>  <i>“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Is 53:5)</i>
<b>The Gospels Favorite</b>	During the time of the NT, Matthew quotes from Isaiah extensively. Jesus quotes from Isaiah’s messianic promises in the synagogue in Nazareth and they tried to throw him off a cliff (Luke 4). The Gospel writers quote from Isaiah more than any other OT prophets.
<b>General Outline</b>	For our purposes, we will take a “macro” look at his calling (Isaiah 6); the themes of judgment in 1-39, and the themes of comfort/salvation/grace that he exhibits in 40-66.

### His Calling (Isaiah 6)

<b>A High Calling</b>	<i>In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” <sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” <sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (6:1-8)</i>
<b>A Hard Calling</b>	<sup>9</sup> He said, “Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.” <sup>11</sup> Then I said, “For how long, Lord?” And he answered: “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, <sup>12</sup> until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. (6:9, 11-12)

**Isaiah 1-39 – Important Passages for Understanding Why Judgment Came**

<p><b>The Vineyard that Didn't Produce (Is 5)</b></p>	<p>I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. <sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. <sup>3</sup> “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? <sup>5</sup> Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled (5:1-5).</p>
<p><b>Leaders that Didn't Trust God Was with Them (Is 7)</b></p>	<p>When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it... <sup>3</sup> Then the Lord said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field... <sup>10</sup> Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, <sup>11</sup> “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.” (7:1, 3, 10-12)</p>
<p><b>But God Was Graceful in the Midst of Judgment</b></p>	<p><sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, <sup>16</sup> for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. (7:14-16)</p>

\*\*1-39 is a combination of narrative and prophesy. As you read through these chapters you will find that the themes of judgment are connected to unfaithfulness (like the vineyard that didn't produce) and the lack of trust among the leaders of Judah. Judah appealed to Assyria to help against Israel. Isaiah told them not to because it would lead to trouble as well for them. It did. And it all happened because the leaders failed to trust the Lord.

\*\* Also keep in mind the great Messianic prophesy in Isaiah 9. There is always hope in the midst of darkness!

**Isaiah 40-66: Important Passages for Understanding How Comfort/Grace/Salvation Was Going to Come**

<p><b>The Call to Comfort</b></p>	<p><i>Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (40:1-2)</i></p>
<p><b>Will Come from a Voice in the Wilderness</b></p>	<p><i>A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (40:2-5)</i></p>
<p><b>Will Come from a Servant God Upholds and Delights In</b></p>	<p><i>“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. <sup>3</sup> A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; <sup>4</sup> he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” (42:1-4)</i></p>
<p><b>Will Come from The Servant of Sorrows, Familiar with Suffering</b></p>	<p><i>Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?<sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. (53:1-3)</i></p>
<p><b>Will Come from the Servant Who Was Pierced</b></p>	<p><i>Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (53:4-6)</i></p>
<p><b>Will Come from the Servant God Was Pleased to Crush</b></p>	<p><i><sup>10</sup> Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge<sup>12</sup> my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.</i></p>

\*\*The most important material in 40-66 are the “Servant Songs.” They are found in chs 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12