

An Introduction to the Old Testament
Class 14
Prophets 1: Isaiah
2025-2026
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I. BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AND TIMELINE

II. WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

- A. Not just fortune-tellers!
- B. God's messengers proclaiming God's message to God's people
- C. They spoke to the people on behalf of God, and they spoke to God on behalf of the people.

III. THE PROPHETS AND THE KINGS

- A. The prophets arose with the kings.
- B. Kind of a checks and balances action of God, always appealing for the kings and the people to be faithful to the Law of Moses.
- C. Prophet/King Pairings:
 - 1. Samuel arose with Saul
 - 2. Nathan arose with David
 - 3. Elijah arose with Ahab in the north
 - 4. Isaiah served Hezekiah.

IV. THE PROPHETS AND THE EXILE

- A. For the prophets, an enormous theme is the Babylonian Captivity, which is called the "Exile."
- B. This is the chief judgment they imagine, the primary threat that God speaks. It is a huge moment of God's discipline that falls on God's people.
- C. Prophets can be dated according to the Babylonian captivities. We call them:
 - 1. "Pre-exilic"—Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk (right before), Zephaniah

2. “Exilic”—Jeremiah/Lamentations (though some begins pre-exilic), Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah
 3. “Post-exilic”—Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
 4. Some unknown—Joel, Jonah
- D. Prophets tend to focus their message on Israel in the north (Amos) or Judah in the south (Isaiah).
- E. When Northern prophets (like Hosea) speak of the threat from the North they mean Assyria. Assyria will conquer Israel and remove them from the land in 722 BC, but not in the same way as Babylon. They don’t really return from this captivity.
- F. Southern prophets (like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) speak of the threat from the north and it’s Babylon. Babylonian captivity is 606 BC, and Judah WILL return from captivity 70 years later, as Jeremiah promises.

V. PROPHETS AND SALVATION HISTORY

- A. In history, they fall AFTER Moses (all) and David (all except Samuel).
- B. Their message is very focused on faithfulness to the law of Moses, but the promise to David about a future eternal king is prominent as well.

VI. FORTH-TELLING, FORE-TELLING, TELESCOPING

- A. **Forthtelling (Forth-Telling)** — Telling *forth* what God says. Not telling forth the future but telling forth the word of God.

The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵ Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. (Isa. 44:13-15)

- B. **Foretelling (Fore-Telling)** – Telling something *before* it happens. This is where the prophets do tell the future.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isa 7:14)

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). (Matt 1:22–23)

28 who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’” 1 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: (Isa 44:28-45:1)

I.e., Cyrus king of Persia, who we met at the end of 2 Chronicles and the beginning of Ezra 1, the king who sent Israel back from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple...in 538 BC.

- C. Idea of **Telescoping** – Like when we see mountains through a telescope. The mountain peaks look close together, but really, they’re miles apart. Prophets see things next to each other that are sometimes separated by many, many years. E.g., Isa. 61:1-2

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; ² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. (Isa. 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:18-21)

- The first part of this passage takes place in the life of Jesus (Luke 4:18–21). But Jesus doesn’t read the last part of Isaiah’s prophecy. Seems that the end of 61:2 will take place in the future when Jesus returns. That’s the real “day of vengeance.”

VII. ISAIAH

- A. Isaiah is mentioned 22 times in the NT. Some have referred to his book as “the 5th Gospel” because it reveals Christ so vividly.
- B. Isa 1:1 tells us WHEN approximately he wrote. Mid-700s BC to early 600s BC. Most prophets have introductions like this that allow us to place them in history.
- C. A few references to the specific kings: Uzziah dies in 6:1 (740 BC); the Immanuel promise is spoken to Ahaz son of Uzziah in 7:14; Hezekiah interacts extensively with Isaiah in 36–49
- D. Basic division of Isaiah is 1–39 and 40–66 with 36–39 being a hinge.
1. 1–39: God speaks to Israel, Judah, surrounding nations and threatens coming judgment. Often from “the north.”

2. 40–66: Perspective shifts. Now it's as if exile has already happened or is happening, God speaks words of encouragement and comfort about a future restoration and deliverance.
- E. Powerful Vision of God—Isaiah 6; 40
- F. Vivid Picture of the Crucifixion—Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (one of the five Servant Songs that speak of Christ in vivid, glorious terms)
- G. Other Great Themes in Isaiah
1. God's Sovereignty over all things—Isa 46:5–11
 2. Great Gospel Ideas—1:18; 53:6; 57:15
 3. Some of the Clearest prophecies about Jesus
 - a. John the Baptist—40:3–5 and Luke 3:4–6
 - b. Christmas prophecies—7:14; 9:1–7; 11:1–5
 - c. Jesus' ministry—Isa 61:1–3 and Luke 4:18–21; Luke 7:20–23 and Isa 35:5–6
 - d. Crucifixion—52:13–53:12
 4. The Eternal Covenant of Redemption—Isa 61:1–2
 5. The Holy Spirit
 - a. Anoints Jesus—Isa 61:1
 - b. God will pour out the Spirit on his people—Isa 32:15; 44:3
 6. Eschatology
 - a. New Heaven and New Earth – Isa 65:17–25 – but note that prophets speak from the perspective they understand. At times a bit beyond. But it was the coming of Christ when the concept of “eternal life” and an “age to come” began to become clearer. With Isaiah, the notion of a glorified body living forever was beyond him. So, his “eternity” sounds like a return to Genesis 4–6 when humans lived hundreds and hundreds of years but not forever.
 - b. Their worm shall not die – Isa 66:24
 - c. The glory of the future – Isa 35