The Book of Isaiah
The Prophecy of the Coming Messiah

Introduction

As we enter into the study of the book of Isaiah, we must gird our minds for spiritual action just as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13,

> *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

These words are a perfect introduction to the Book of Isaiah. For if there is one theme that runs through the book it is *"the revelation of Jesus Christ."* The prophet Isaiah says more about the Lord Jesus Christ than any other Old Testament book. There are more than 40 prophecies of His First Coming, and over 80 prophecies regarding His Second Coming and Kingdom. This is why Isaiah has been called "The Evangelist of the Old Testament," and his book has been referred to as "The Fifth Gospel."

Not only this, but the book of Isaiah is a concise summary of the teaching of the whole Bible. In this book we can find the foundational doctrines of:

1. The creation (Isa. 42:5; 45:18).
2. The fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12–21).
3. The sinful rebellion of mankind (Isa. 1:2–6).
4. The virgin birth of the Savior (Isa. 7:13–14).
5. His crucifixion and resurrection (Isa. 53:1–12).
6. The offer of eternal salvation by grace through faith (Isa. 1:18–20; 55:1–7).
7. The promise of a future eternal kingdom under Christ (Isa. 60:1–22; 65:17–25).
8. The creation of New Heavens and a New Earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22–23).

Because of the vast scope of doctrinal themes in the book it has been called "The Romans of the Old Testament."

In addition, the very structure of the book parallels the entire Bible. In Chapters 1–39 we have the conviction of sin, call to repentance, and warning of judgment. This parallels the message of the 39 books of the Old Testament. Then, in Chapters 40–66 (the last 27 chapters), we see the message of the coming Savior and the offer of salvation, which encapsulates the message contained in the 27 books of the New Testament.

As if these facts were not amazing enough, the book is named after the author, the prophet Isaiah. His name means "The Salvation of Jehovah," and that is the very theme of the book!

Though critics have sought to deny the single authorship of the book, suggesting at least three authors, in John 12:37–41, he quotes from Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10, ascribing those quotes to Isaiah.

In fact, the book of Isaiah is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book except the Psalms.

Types of Messianic Prophecies

I believe it was Pastor Bob Bolender from Austin Bible Church who pointed out that there are four types of Messianic Prophecy in the book of Isaiah:

1. Prophecies of Jesus' First Coming (i.e., Isa. 7:14; 53:1–12).
2. Prophecies about His Second Coming (Isa. 2:1–4; 24:1–23; 32:1–4; 33:17–24; 35:1–10; 60:1–22).
3. Prophecies that combine the two comings (Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–12).
4. Prophecies that give an overview of His redemptive works (Isa. 42:1–13; 61:1–11).

Style of Writing

Isaiah is one of the most brilliantly written books known to man. In Chapters 1–35, he writes in poetry. Chapters 36–39 are a historical narrative, so he writes in prose. Then, from Chapters 40–66, as he brings the theme of salvation to its climax, he reverts again to poetry. There are five songs in the book, beginning with the song of the unfruitful vineyard in Chapter 5. Isaiah's literary skill is astounding as he uses parables, similitudes, analogies, and prophecy to convey the message of man's sinfulness and of God's love and plan of redemption.

About the Author

Isaiah's name ("The Salvation of Jehovah") suggests that he was raised by godly, believing parents. He was raised in Jerusalem, and his family had access to the royal court. He was married and had two sons, whose names had prophetic significance (Isa. 7:3; 8:3). His ministry lasted at least 60 years, and tradition (Justin Martyr, 100–165 A.D.) says he was martyred under the reign of Manasseh by being sawed in two. It is believed that this is the historical reference for Hebrews 11:37. Isaiah's theological grasp is the broadest and deepest of any author in the Old Testament and is perhaps only surpassed by the Apostle Paul.

In the course of his book, Isaiah presents three methods—actually, three levels—of divine revelation. God reveals Himself to man through creation, through His inspired Word, and ultimately through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Failure to respond to these manifestations of God's love and mercy can only result in eternal condemnation.

Outline of the Book

Again, the major break in the book is Chapters 1–39: condemnation of sin and call to repentance; and Chapters 40–66: the coming of the Savior and offer of salvation. However, for our study, we will further divide the book along its theme development.

I. The Problem of Sin and God's Plan of Redemption (Chapters 1–12).
II. The Sovereignty of God and His Judgment of the Nations (Chapters 13–35).
III. The Assyrian Invasion and the Deliverance by God (Chapters 36–39).
IV. The Revelation of the Savior and the Redemption of Mankind (Chapters 40–66).

The Challenge of Isaiah

As we work through this book, we will be repeatedly confronted with the necessity of making personal application of the message of the prophet to our personal lives. The danger is to study Isaiah as a historical document without ever being spiritually touched by the fire of his words. His rebuke to Judah is a rebuke to present-day America. His call to repentance (self-examination, confession, correction) is a spiritual x-ray into each of our lives. The promise of grace, mercy, cleansing, and deliverance gives us hope and assurance, not just to say, "God hates the sin but loves the sinner," but rather to acknowledge the truth that while God loves the sinner, He loves us too much to leave us in our sinful condition.

As one author has pointed out here in the Church Age, "We stand precisely on (Isaiah) 56:1, looking back to the work of the Servant (now fulfilled in the person, life, death and resurrection, of the Lord Jesus) and looking forward to the coming of the Anointed Conqueror." (J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah,* p. 33, as quoted by Thomas Constable in his *Notes on Isaiah,* p. 15).

I. THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION (CHAPTERS 1–12)

CLASS ONE
Isaiah1:1–15

Isaiah Chapter One—The Condemnation of Judah and Call to Repentance.

This is the theme of Nehemiah, "How God turns cursing into blessing" (Neh. 13:2b). It is worth pointing out that Chapters 1–5, which reveal the degenerate spiritual condition of Judah and their need for salvation, precedes the call of Isaiah in Chapter 6. It is likely that Isaiah presented the depravity of the nation first to set the stage for his call and commission by God, as the antidote.

Isaiah 1:1
The Historical Setting

The prophet ministered under the four kings of Judah named here, whose combined reigns spanned the years from 792–686 B.C. Isaiah's call came to him *"in the year that King Uzziah died"* (Isa. 6:1), which was 740 B.C. Since he recorded the death of Sennacherib (Isa. 37:38), which occurred in 681 B.C., his ministry must have lasted at least 60 years. Isaiah's contemporaries were Amos and Hosea in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Micah in Judah. During this time, Jonah also went to minister in Nineveh (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1).

Isaiah 1:2–15
God's Indictment Against Judah

This charge against Judah actually runs all the way to Chapter 12. It is mixed with warnings of judgment and promises of deliverance, if the people of Judah will repent and turn to the Lord. In this introductory section, we see seven graphic pictorial figures.

1:2 <u>The Creation called as a witness</u>.
Here, we see the fulfillment of Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 30:19 and 32:1 that Heaven and Earth would one day be witness to Israel's spiritual defection. This figure presents a courtroom scene, in which God is the judge, bringing charges against His people.

The accusation is that God had been faithful to His people, as a Father to his children, but they had rebelled against Him.

1:3 <u>Judah became more insensitive than dumb beasts</u>.
It is not without significance that the picture in this verse foretells the scene in Bethlehem, where the promised King of Israel was laid in a manger/crib, among the beasts of burden, while the nation's leaders were ignorant of His coming.

The point is that when we rebel against God, our physical appetites increase, but our spiritual senses are dulled, until we are more brutish than even the beasts. This truth is clearly developed in Galatians 5:1–7 and Ephesians 4:17–19. Consistent with the message of Isaiah, the means of spiritual recovery is found in James 4:7–10.

1:4 <u>Rebellious children</u>.
In this verse, the indictments against Judah come fast and furious. Seven charges are brought by God in rapid fire order. The verse begins with *"Alas,"* which in Hebrew is *Hoi*, or "Woe." It was the typical lament at funerals (1 Kings 13:30; Jer. 22:18–19; Amos 5:16). It is also the seven-fold charge of Jesus against the religious leaders of His day (Matt. 23:13–36).

The charges are summarized in that *"They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel."* This title for God runs all through Isaiah, being used about 30 times, and is actually an Old Testament designation for the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ, whom Isaiah sees in Isaiah 6:1. Isaiah's favorite term for God is *"Lord of hosts,"* which he uses over 60 times.

1:5–6 <u>The rebellious slave.</u>
Here, the picture is of a slave who refuses to obey his master. No amount of beating brings him into submission. His whole body, from head to foot, is wounds and bruises. As the discipline of God on the nation intensified, their rebellion only increased. Though God would gladly have brought healing treatment (v. 6b), the nation was unwilling to be restored.

1:7–8 <u>A deserted daughter</u>.
The prophets' illustrations move in a downward spiral, from a dumb beast (v. 3) to rebellious children (v. 4), to a rebellious slave (vv. 5–6), to the most pitiable of all, a beloved daughter, sitting in the ruins of a defeated city (vv. 7–8). This would ultimately be the fate of many of the "daughters of Jerusalem," when the city fell to the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

1:9–10 <u>Sodom and Gomorrah</u>.
This figure became a common symbol of Israel's sinfulness (Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:44–50; Matt. 10:15; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; Rev. 11:8).

1:11–15 <u>Unclean intruders into God's Temple</u>.
Here, Isaiah exposes their phony religious practices. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, their outward religion was like whitewashed tombs, but inwardly they were like graves full of dead corpses (Matt. 23:27). Their religion was ritual without reality.

<u>Review</u>—The Salvation of God Offered and Rejected

1. Isaiah opens his prophecies with a historical note, listing the four kings under whose reign he ministered. His ministry covered around 60 years (v. 1).
2. Using seven figures or analogies, he then indicts Israel for its spiritual apostacy (vv. 2–17).
3. As we move into vv. 16–31, we will see that God, in His matchless grace and mercy, yet offers salvation, both national (temporal) and personal (eternal) (vv. 16–20).
4. Tragically, as history has recorded, the offer of redemption was rejected, and in 721 B.C., Israel—the Northern Kingdom—went into slavery to Assyria.

<u>CLASS TWO</u>

It is difficult for those who know God by faith in Jesus Christ to comprehend the depths of depravity to which men will fall, and the incredible hardness of heart they will develop in their hatred of God.

The greatest example of this will be in the coming millennial kingdom. Multitudes born in this most blessed time of human history: with Jesus Christ Himself ruling the world, a world of perfect peace and prosperity, with perfect justice in government, will yet reject His offer of salvation, and seek to overthrow His throne (Rev. 20:7–10).

The Nation of Israel in the time of Isaiah is but one in the long line of history that illustrates over and over again that, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"* (Jer. 17:9). See now their rejection of both salvation and the Savior.

<u>Isaiah 1:16–20</u>
The Divine Offer of Salvation

The righteousness of God demands that He offer salvation. The justice of God requires that those who reject it must suffer both the temporal and eternal consequences. What the righteousness of God demands, His justice must provide. The greatest example of this principle is the cross of Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible teaches that the foundation of the Throne of God is neither sovereignty nor love, but rather the combination of righteousness and justice, which we call "Holiness" (Isa. 6:3).

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." Psalm 97:2

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy
And truth go before Your face." Psalm 89:14

All of the other attributes of God (Sovereignty, Love, Eternal Life, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Immutability, Veracity) act as guardians of His absolute Righteousness and Justice.

For example, magnify Sovereignty over Righteousness and Justice, and you end up with a theology that says, "God is God, He can do whatever He likes." And yet, even Abraham knew that he could hold God accountable to the standard of Righteousness and Justice (Gen. 18:25).

It is worth noticing, in v. 21, that when the nation was right with God, it was full of justice and righteousness, the reflection of God by those who believed in and obeyed Him.

Isaiah now sets before sinful Judah the offer of divine deliverance in four charges:

1. Cleansing is available (v. 16).
2. Transformed lives are possible (v. 17).
3. Forgiveness is complete and total (v. 18).
4. But salvation must be volitional (vv. 19–20).

1:16 <u>Cleansing is available</u>.
The "washing" here speaks of the cleansing of salvation (Jer. 4:14; John 13:10; Eph. 5:26). This is logically followed by obedient living or *"fruits worthy of repentance"* (Luke 3:8). To attempt to renovate our lives apart from regeneration is hopeless (John 3:3, 7).

In Psalm 51, David shows us the cleansing available to the sinning believer through confession (1 John 1:9). Jesus reveals to Peter that salvation is like a once-for-all bath, while confession is like a daily foot-washing (John 10:13).

1:17 <u>Transformed lives are possible</u>.
The mantra of many in this darkened age is, "This is just the way I am," or "I just want to be me," or "Just learn to accept yourself as you are." It is taken for granted that genuine and lasting changes in our character and conduct are impossible. The other side of the coin finds many who are pretending to be what they are not, living in their own fantasy, which they see as a blockbuster movie. The truth is that each and every one of us needs to work on personal renovation throughout our lives. This is only made possible by the inner work of transforming regeneration (new birth) by faith in Jesus Christ, and by ongoing spiritual growth resulting in what the Bible calls sanctification, or conformity to Christ. Once one has become a child of God by faith, this personal renovation calls for life-long action. The indwelling Holy Spirit makes this possible. Even the great apostle Paul, near the end of his life, declared that his spiritual renovation was a work in progress (Phil. 3:12–14).

1. <u>We must become a disciple of good over evil</u>.
   If we are to learn to do good, we must enter into the school of Jesus Christ. His life and teaching as recorded for us in the Gospels is the primer school for those who would learn the nature of goodness. We advance beyond the elementary of our education as we enter into the epistles, where the deep things of God are made known to us. To *"Learn to do good"* is a life-long pursuit of being transformed into the image of Christ by the *"renewing of your mind"* (Rom. 12:1–2).

2. We need to seek after justice.
   Micah tells us that the opposite of true justice is to love what is evil and to hate what is good (Micah 3:1–2). This is the default position of every fallen soul. Evil comes naturally, but good must be learned. True justice is to honor what is good and pure, and to hate and to fight against all that is evil. To seek justice is to pursue the mind of God through His Word. The Bible is our textbook, because it is *"the mind of Christ"* (1 Cor. 2:16). Once we have come to understand justice in principle, we then need to make justice a way of life.

3. Then we need to engage the forces of evil.
   It takes boldness to stand against the crowd, but this is what we are called to do. We have to learn to *"rebuke ... defend ... plead"* as the occasion demands. While we may admit that "the pen is mightier than the sword," there are times when the *"word spoken in due season"* (Prov. 15:23) is mightiest of all. When Abraham Lincoln stood at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg, in which there were over 51,000 casualties on both sides, he made this statement. *"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."* His speech was only 271 words and ten sentences long and lasted about two minutes. Yet today, over 160 years later, it is his words that are remembered around the world.

   I was in a remote village in Africa teaching pastors some years ago. During a conversation with them afterward, something brought up the topic of the American Civil War. One of the young men then gave an impromptu recital of the Gettysburg Address, which he had memorized many years before. Words have power. The right words at the time can change a life. We can all think of times we wish we had spoken out but were not courageous enough to. What a difference our words might have made in the life of one being unfairly judged, or mocked, or shamed! Let us determine to speak the *"word fitly spoken* [which is] *like apples of gold in settings of silver"* (Prov. 25:11)

1:18 Forgiveness is complete and total.
The word *"reason"* is used not in the sense of any negotiation, but rather of God restoring them to sound reason. The issue of sin can only be settled by the new birth. Scarlet was the dye made from the purple grub worm. It was very rare and was indelible. If you got this dye on a garment, it would never come out. But God is able to cleanse us of sins that to us are "permanent." How amazing then that in Psalm 22:6, the Psalm Jesus quoted while on the cross, the Messiah is compared to a *"worm,"* the very worm from which the purple dye was made. And in Mark 15:17 and Luke 23:11, Jesus was mocked by the soldiers by putting on Him a purple robe. This was the robe designated for royalty and was also the color of the veil in the Temple (Exod. 26:1, 31, 36; Dan. 5:7, 16). Just as Jesus bore the stain of our sins on the cross, so we who believe will one day reign with Him in His kingdom (Rev. 20:6; 22:5).

1:19–20 But salvation must be volitional.
The key word in these two verses is the little word "**if**." This word implies several things:

1. Potential
   It is possible for them to be *"willing and obedient."* It is also an option for them to *"refuse and rebel."* Two distinct ways are set before them. They must choose the right or the left path. To the left is the path of self-will and self-indulgence. Its end is destruction. To the right is the way of self-denial and self-surrender. This path can have only a good ending. As Moses said to Israel in the very beginning of the nation, *"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil … I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life …"* (Deut. 30:15, 19–20).

2. Responsibility
   These verses are set up on a protasis/apodosis basis. This is nothing more than a conditional sentence, with the words *"If … then"* either spoken or implied. The *"If"* protasis states the condition, followed by the *"then,"* either stated or implied, which gives the result. It is impossible for such a construction to be a part of the language of God unless men have true "response-ability," meaning the ability to respond one way or the other.

   Joshua challenged his generation with these words, *"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve … But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Josh. 24:15).

3. Volitional capacity
   Based on the principles of point two, there must be volitional capacity, or the ability to make free decisions and choices. To present an option to one who is unable to make a choice would be neither right nor fair. In other words, it would violate the concept of "righteousness and justice," which is the foundation of the Throne of God. Consider the logic of C.S. Lewis on this topic:

   "If God's moral judgment differs from ours so that our 'black' may be His 'white,' we can mean nothing by calling Him good; for to say, 'God is good,' while asserting that His goodness is wholly other than ours, is really only to say, 'God is we know not what;' and an utterly unknown quality in God cannot give us moral grounds for loving or obeying Him. If He is not (in our sense) good, we shall obey if at all, only through fear—and should be equally ready to obey an omnipotent Fiend. The Doctrine of Total Depravity, when the consequence is drawn that, since we are totally depraved, our idea of good is worth simply nothing— may turn Christianity into a form of devil-worship." (*The Problem of Pain*, pp. 28–29, 1940)

   The same would be true if God sets before men choices, which they have no ability to choose! It makes a mockery of the word "justice."

4. Consequences
   In the moral rule of God, all choices have consequences. Good decisions bring good results, and bad choices lead to painful and unpleasant ends. I believe it was Thomas Carlyle who said, "He who chooses a path also chooses where it leads." This is a fundamental outworking of the rule of God in the universe (see Rom. 1:18–32).

CLASS THREE

Isaiah 1:21–31
When God's Grace is Rejected, Vengeance Follows

The greatest insult to God is to refuse to believe Him. God values faith above all other virtues. This is because humble faith acknowledges God's trustworthiness. To say that God is faithful is to declare Him to be the embodiment of Truth. When we say that a man is faithful, as the Scripture does of Moses (Heb. 3:1–2), is to say that he lives his life in accord with what God has said. Therefore, to be presented with the Word of God, which is from the very essence of truth (John 17:17), and to reject it, is to malign/blaspheme the very character of God Himself. This is why, in the economy of God, both eternal salvation and eternal damnation are dependent on either faith or unbelief (John 3:16–21).

1:21–23 God in His Omniscience sees them as they are.
The reason for God's rejection of their "worship" (vv. 10–15) is because it is all external. In these verses, God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7: Mark 7:6; Psalm 26:2; Jer. 20:12; Acts 15:8; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23).

Note the spiritual contrasts in vv. 21–23, which reveal the path Judah had chosen:

1. The once faithful city had become a spiritual prostitute (unfaithful).
2. The place where justice and righteousness once lodged (Psalm 89:14; 97:2), was now a den of murderers. They killed the poor and weak by corrupt laws and judges.
3. The use of silver and wine illustrates what was once valuable is now corrupted.
4. The corruption of leaders in a nation by graft and bribery deprives the weak and helpless and destroys the nation. It is often said that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The truth is that power appeals to the corrupt, who then corrupt the power they gain.

These descriptions of Judah in the eighth century before Christ are a perfect picture of what America has become in 2025. May God help us to repent and recover as a nation!

1:24–25 God in His Omnipotence declares what He will do.
God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10), because He is outside of time, and sees all time in one glance. What He says He will do in judging Judah will surely come to pass. The *"Lord of hosts"* means "Lord of Armies," and is Isaiah's favorite term for God, being used over 60 times in the book.

God is able to judge the wicked, and deliver the righteous, as He sifts a nation in judgment. From 605 to 586 B.C., under the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar, God delivered the faithful by carrying them into the Babylonian captivity. The rest were either slaughtered or left behind in poverty and confusion (read Jer. 24). Moses also prophesied about this judgment in detail (Deut. 28:47–68) at least 700 years earlier! All of this came about, roughly, 140 years after Isaiah prophesied, but the Word of God is sure, and cannot be broken.

1:26–31 <u>God in His Omnipresence anticipates their future</u>.
In these verses, we have prophecy that looks forward to the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 11:11, we learn that this will come about after God recovers Israel from among the nations *"the second time."* The first restoration was from the Babylonian captivity in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The second time began on May 14, 1948. Christians often become impatient, wondering when God will fulfill His promises to Israel, since they have been back in the land for over 70 years. We must always remember, that "God may wait, but He's never late." In His perfect timing, all that He has promised will come to pass.

<u>What God will soon do for Israel</u>:

1. He will restore righteousness and faithfulness in her leaders (v. 26).
2. He will redeem Zion, when she repents, with righteousness and justice (do you notice how much God mentions these attributes?) (v. 27).
3. Those who reject the grace of God will be totally consumed (v. 28).
4. The unbelieving will come to be ashamed of their unfaithfulness when they are convicted by the truth (vv. 29–30). The *"terebinth"* or oak groves were places of idol worship and sexual orgies called "worship." Always remember that at the final judgment (Rev. 20:11–15), the evidence of guilt will be so overwhelming that the unbelieving will bow before God and declare His judgment to be just (Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10–11).
5. Those who considered themselves to be *"strong,"* along with all their "works," will be burned up, and there will be no escape. This anticipates the vision of John in the Revelation 20:11–15:

   "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books … And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

<u>Isaiah Chapter One Summary</u>

1. This chapter anticipates the message of the entire book.
2. Again, we can divide the book into messages of condemnation (Chapters 1–39) and of consolation (Chapters 40–66).
3. As we will see, these two themes were memorialized by the names of the two sons of Isaiah: *"Shear-Jashub"* ("A remnant shall return," Isa. 7:3) and *"Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz"* ("Speed the spoil, hasten the prey," Isa. 8:1).

4. Isaiah illustrates for us that God always offers grace and deliverance before bringing judgment. We ought to very carefully consider what this means for America in this year of 2025. If God has offered deliverance from evil and corruption in our nation, and the population as a whole rejects it, there is nothing left but great destruction.
5. We who are believers must be like Isaiah and warn our nation of the danger of failing to exploit the political victory with the proclamation of the Gospel Message, to focus on winning the lost to Christ, and calling believers to obedience to God.

CLASS FOUR
Isaiah 2–4

This is a rather long segment to take in one bite, but the section breaks down into three closely related ideas.

1. The promise of national redemption (2:1–4).
2. The certainty of national judgment (2:5–4:1).
3. The glory of the coming Redeemer (4:2–6).

The last section cited above is the first of many prophecies in the book directly relating to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also the first of the six *"Branch"* prophecies in the Old Testament, which find their fulfillment in Matthew Chapter One.

Isaiah 2:1–4
The Promise of National Redemption

The nation of Israel was created through Abraham and called into a covenant of faith with God (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–6). The unique election of this nation was to bring into the world both the written and the Living Word of God. The nation was then called on to obey the Word of God revealed to them, and to trust in the promised Savior. They were also warned that unbelief and rebellion against God would bring increasing national discipline (Leviticus 26) and ultimately national destruction (Deut. 11:22–28; Chapter 28). In the following section, Isaiah contrasts the promises of future blessing with the present degeneracy and decline of his nation.

Six Little Friends

I have six little friends
They taught me all I knew
Their names are what, and when, and where,
And why, and how, and who. – Longfellow

1. When? *"In the latter days."*
2. Where? *"The mountain of the Lord's house."*
3. What? *"Shall be exalted … all nations shall flow to it."*
4. Who? *"He will teach us His ways."*
5. Why? *"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."*

6. How? *"He shall judge between nations ... They shall beat their swords into plowshares ... Neither shall they learn war anymore."*

Isaiah 2:5–4:1
The Certainty of National Judgment

2:5–22 Judgment for idolatry.
All throughout her long history, the greatest spiritual snare for Israel has been the sin of idolatry. It began shortly after her deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 32) with the golden calf.

2:5–9 The *first* appeal and the indictment.
God always gives the offer of grace before imposing judgment (v. 5). To *"walk in the light of the Lord"* is to live in obedience to His revealed Word (John 8:12; 1 John 1:7). If God's grace is rejected, then only judgment can follow (vv. 6–8).

> **Note:** When men turn from God they turn to idols of false prophets (v. 6), money (v. 7a), possessions (v. 7b), and false gods (vv. 8–9).

2:10–22 The Day of the Lord and final judgment.
The Day of the Lord begins with the Tribulation Period. Note 2:11b–12, *"in that day ... the Day of the Lord of hosts."* You will see the phrase "in that day" repeatedly through Isaiah. It always refers to the Tribulation followed by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly kingdom (see 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:18; Obad. 1;15; Zeph. 1:7–8; 2:2–3; Zec. 14:1).

> **Note:** It is critical to distinguish between the *"Day of Christ"* (the Rapture—1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1;14; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6; 2:16) and the *"Day of the Lord"* (Tribulation and Second Coming, 1 Thess. 5:2–4).

The effect of this judgment will be the breaking of the proud and the humbling of all men, and the destruction of all idols (Isa. 2:11–18). The ministry of John the Baptist also had this goal in mind (Isa. 40:3–8; Luke 3:4–5).

In the end, men will seek to hide from the Lord in the caves of the mountains (Isa. 2:10, 19, 22). John pictures this in Revelation 6:15–17. How interesting is it that many of the wealthy of our time are building huge underground bunkers in the hope of escaping doomsday!

3:1–3 Judgment on the leaders of the nation.
Eleven classes of men are mentioned to whom the people look to for leadership. All of them will be brought down as God brings famine on the nation.

3:4–15 Judgment by the children.
Rebellion against God has specific inevitable consequences. When man revolts against his Master, nature revolts against man (Gen. 3:17–19). Next, children revolt against their parents (3:4–15) and the wife revolts against her husband (4:16–4:1).

3:10–11 A *second* appeal.
God is able to protect faithful believers in a time of national judgment. However, for those who are resolutely wicked, there will be no escape. Our generation is ripe for many of the haughty to be brought down, and for the corrupt to be exposed and judged!

3:16–4:1 Judgment on the women.
Here, we have an indictment of the self-absorbed and narcissistic women of Israel. The prophet Amos, and early contemporary of Isaiah, likened them to *"cows of Bashan"* (Amos. 4:1) because of their selfish and self-indulgent ways. Bashan was a place of lush grass and fat cows. Unfortunately, it was also a center of demonic worship and activity (Psalm 22:12–13).

In contrast to their arrogant and seductive ways (3:16), God will strip away all their wealth and carry them away in slavery. This came about when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem (c. 586 B.C.), and the wealthy women were reduced to begging to be claimed by any man (4:1).

Isaiah 4:2–6
The Glory of the Coming Redeemer

Here, Isaiah introduces us to *"The Branch of the Lord."* Three Old Testament prophets speak of the Lord Jesus Christ using this figure, with slightly different emphasis.

1. The *"Branch of the LORD"* (Isa. 4:2).
2. The "Branch from David's roots" (Isa. 11:1).
3. The *"Branch of Righteousness"* (Jer. 23:5; 33:15–16).
4. God's "servant Branch" (Zech. 3:8).
5. *"The Man ... the BRANCH"* (Zech. 6:12).

That these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ is declared by Matthew (2:23), *"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"* The root word for both "branch" and "Nazareth" is the Hebrew word *netzer*!

The phrase *"in that day"* (Isa. 4:2; 3:7, 18) refer back to *"The Day of the Lord"* (Isa. 2:12). Once the Tribulation ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rev. 19:11–16), His kingdom will be established, and blessing and prosperity will prevail. As in the days of the Exodus (Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19–24), the Shekinah Glory (the glory of His presence) will shine above Jerusalem.

Summary
In these chapters, Isaiah has set before us promises of grace and glory in contrast to warnings of shame and judgment. While his message was originally given to Israel, every promise and warning is valid to us today, living in these United States of America. God has graciously given us, in this present hour, a chance to repent and reclaim His blessings on our nation. However, with such unmerited grace and mercy comes a warning: If this nation fails to turn back to God and His Word, and to repudiate the vile wickedness that has come to dominate this country for so long, then all the warnings of national collapse and enslavement will surely come to pass. A nation is made up

of individuals. Each and every one of us must choose our path. *"Come and let us walk in the light of the Lord* (Isa. 2:5) … *Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings"* (Isa. 3:10). Let this be the path we choose for ourselves and urge others to take as well!

CLASS FIVE
Isaiah 5

The Song of the Vineyard
This parable in song is similar to Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam. 12:1–5), in that it calls on the listeners for their judgment. Jesus used this very format in His Parable of the Vineyard (Matt. 21:33–46). The listeners do not realize they are pronouncing judgment on themselves (Matt. 7:1–5)! The principle is repeated throughout the Book of Isaiah: If we reject the grace and mercy of God, His righteous judgment is inescapable.

This is the first of five songs Isaiah sings in the Book of Isaiah (Isa. 12, 26, 35, 54). He was not only a richly gifted prophet but was also a literary genius and folk singer.

Isaiah 5:1–7
The Song/Parable of the Vineyard

This song begins like a joyful wedding song and ends as a funeral dirge. It reveals the rich blessings God had bestowed on His people, and their failure to bear good spiritual fruit. God had planted His choice vine, Israel, in a fertile land. He had removed the "stones" of foreign nations and placed His watchtower over her. He had prepared for a rich harvest, but the vine produced only worthless grapes.

We who live in this present Church Age ought never to read this without being reminded of Jesus' teaching in John 15 about Himself as the *"true vine,"* with His Father as the vine-keeper. We who have believed in Him are the branches, and His purpose for us is to bear, not only good fruit, but much fruit. The first question for us is, "Am I abiding in the vine?" Is my life one of close fellowship with my Lord and Savior? Secondly, what is the fruit of my life? And is it increasing? These are questions we ought to daily consider and prayerfully answer. If we find we are falling short in our lives, it is time to get back to the basics of the daily disciplines of the Christian life. If there is no fruit, it is because we are not abiding in Him. If we abide in Him, the fruit (Gal. 5:22–23) is a natural consequence.

Six Daily Disciplines
The following are six things we do daily for our physical body. Should we not much more do them for our soul?

1. **Wash—**When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are spiritually washed once for all by the new birth (Titus 3:5; John 13:10; Heb. 10:10). As we grow in grace and truth, we are daily being washed by the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26; 1 John 1:7). When we sin, we need the cleansing that comes from confession of our sins (Psalm 32:3–5; 51:1–2; 1 John 1:9).

2. **Dress—**When we confess our sins, the result is that we *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:20–24). Like the returning prodigal in Luke 15, when we return to our heavenly Father, He clothes us in the robes of His own righteousness.

3. **Eat—**The soul needs nourishment even more than the body (Job 23:12). Jesus said that our souls only thrive *"by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). We need to daily feed on the Word of God if we are to keep our spirit strong.

4. **Walk—**All of us, unless we have some disability, walk somewhere daily. But in the plan of God the demand is to walk in the light of the Spirit and the truth (John 8:12; Gal. 5:16; I John 1:7). The figure of walking is common in the Bible for the Christian life (Eph. 2:10; 4:1; 5:1–2, 8, 15). The upward path of the Christian life is the opposite of the downward path of the world (Eph. 4:17–19).

5. **Work—**God has a work for each of us to accomplish (Matt. 25:15; Mark 13:34), to each his own task, according to his ability. While our salvation is "By grace, through faith, without works" (Rom. 4:3–5; Eph. 2:8–9), once we are a child of God, we are to enter into His works (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:11–14).

6. **Rest—**At the end of the day, the activities and works are done, and it is time to rest. To the Jews of the Old Covenant, this was a perpetual reminder through the many Sabbaths. For us, it is a moment-by-moment rest of the Spirit as we trust God in all our circumstances. In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus offers to the world two kinds of rest. First, for the weary and world-worn, He offers the rest of salvation. Note that He gives this rest as a gift. To those who receive eternal life through Him, He offers a second rest, that which comes as we take up His yoke. This rest for the soul comes through faith and labor (Heb. 4:1, 9–11).

5:3–4 <u>The critical question</u>.
God calls on His people to pass judgment: **"What more could I have done?"** Let us pray and labor so that this question is not asked of us when we stand at the Judgment/Bema Seat of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10)!

5:5–6 <u>The condemnation</u>.
There are essentially three things that the Lord will cause to happen: Removal of protection, cessation of fruit/harvests, and the withholding of rain, drought and famine. The prophet Haggai saw the fulfillment of these things as a result of the captivity (Hag. 1:1–6).

5:7 <u>The interpretation</u>.
Here, Isaiah is instructed to give the lesson first—from agriculture. Then, he gives the spiritual interpretation: Israel is the *"vineyard,"* God is the Beloved who owns the vineyard, and the men of Judah are the choice vine. Note that God looked for Justice and Righteousness (His character—Psalm 84:14; 97:2) but instead found only oppression and the cry for deliverance.

Application:
In Isaiah 1:19–20, we saw the all-important word, *"If."* This word implies both the Sovereignty of God and the free-will of man.

"If you are willing and obedient [see Rom. 1:5 = obedience begins with faith]*, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

This *"if"* was set before Israel very early by Moses (Lev. 26:3, 14). This *"if"* applies to us as well, as we see in Romans 8:12–17, Colossians 1:21–23, and Hebrews 3:7–15.

History is the record of human decisions: the good are blessed by God, and the evil are over-ruled by His Sovereignty.

> *"Truly, this only have I found; that God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes."* Ecclesiastes 7:29

> *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* Isaiah 53:6

God's ultimate over-ruling act was to bring Jesus Christ into the world, to take upon Himself the sins of us all, that we might freely choose to believe in Him for eternal life (2 Cor. 5:14–21).

Isaiah 5:8–25
The Six Woes and the Judgments

This section basically covers the divine implementation of the five cycles of discipline that Moses warned of in Leviticus 26

The word *"Woe"* occurs seven times, but in vv. 22–23, it is used twice to relate to the same thing. This section is also reflected in the eight "Woes" Jesus announced upon Israel, particularly of the Pharisees and Sadducees of His day (Matt. 23:13–36). The "Woes" of Isaiah were followed by both the Assyrian and the Babylonian captivities. The "Woes" of Jesus were followed by the complete eradication of the Nation of Israel by the Romans (70–73 A.D.).

The word "Woe" is a word that expressed both grief and warning. Woe is the opposite of the word *"blessed"* (Matt. 5:1–12). It implies the death of someone precious to the speaker. Here, Isaiah announces the death of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria (721 B.C.), and over a hundred years later, the death of the Kingdom of Judah (606–586 B.C.). In all, Isaiah pronounces 20 woes against Israel in this book!

The **six woes** (vv. 22–23 is one woe) identify the sins of Israel for which she will be judged (see Amos 5:18; 6:1; Rev. 8:13; 9:12). The four "Therefores" (vv. 13–14, 24–25) announce the judgments that will fall because of them.

The six "woes" are answers to the *"why"* of verse 4. Following are six reasons why God's people fail to bring forth fruit:

1. The blight of insatiable greed (vv. 8–10).
2. The blight of self-gratification (vv. 11–12).
   Note: The first "therefore" section (vv. 13–17).
3. The blight of hardened hearts and deliberate challenge to God (vv. 18–19).
4. The blight of spiritual perversion/inversion, (v. 20).
5. The blight of conceit and arrogance (v. 21).
6. The blight of exalting what is abased (v. 22–23).
   Note: The second "therefore" section (vv. 24–25).

Note: These six woes roughly parallel the six things God hates, recorded in Proverbs 6:16–19.

Isaiah 5:26–30
The Ultimate Judgment—National Destruction

Up to this point, the judgments have followed the five cycles of discipline outlined in Leviticus Chapter 26. What follows is something far worse: the dissolution of the nation. This judgment was finally administered in 721 B.C. on the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Assyrian captivity), and later in 606 B.C. on the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Babylonian captivity).

In response to the mocking taunt of unbelieving Israel (vv. 19–20, i.e. "Show us a sign that we may believe," John 6:30), God will bring the armies of Assyria to destroy Israel.

1. God will *"lift up a banner,"* and *"whistle"* for them to come (v. 26).
2. They will answer the call "swiftly and relentlessly, with no delay" (vv. 26b–27).
3. Their weapons and armaments are "sharp, hardened, and swift" (v. 28).
4. They will "roar like a lion seizing its prey," and the land will be overwhelmed by *"darkness and sorrow"* (vv. 29–30).

Application:

1. God's appeals and warnings to ancient Israel are just as valid to us today.
2. Every day we face the "if" of obedience or disobedience, of blessing or of woe.
3. The fact that we are *"not under the law but under grace"* (Rom. 6:14) only increases our accountability, because *"to whom much is given ... much will be required"* (Luke 12:48).
4. Compare the three "ifs" of Hebrews 3:7–15 with the warning of three levels of increasing discipline in Hebrews 12:5–6:
   a. First comes "rebuke." This is correction from God's Word (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
   b. Next comes "chastening." The word here is *paideuo*, which means "child training.". This is the use of the rod, in painful reinforcement of the rebuke.
   c. Third, we have "scourging." The word *mastigoi* means "to skin alive." This is severe and extreme physical and emotional pain and sorrow. Think of the scourging of Jesus as an example.

d. The believer who persists in open defiance and rebellion against God and His Word will face the ultimate form of discipline—premature death (1 John 6:16; Acts 5:5, 10; 1 Cor. 5:1–5).

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will life you up." James 4:7, 10

CLASS SIX
Isaiah 6

The Revelation of God and the Call of the Prophet
In the first five chapters, the whole theme of the book has been introduced. The nation is likened to Sodom and Gomorrah in their sinfulness (1:10–11). Still, God in His matchless grace holds out to them the offer of cleansing and salvation (1:16–19). The promise of the Messianic kingdom is set before them (Chapter 2), yet they continue on their path of spiritual self-destruction (Chapters 3–5). It is at this point that Isaiah records his vision of the Lord, and of his own confession, resulting in cleansing and commission as a prophet of God.

6:1–4 God's glory revealed.
God's timing is always perfect. This vision came *"In the year that King Uzziah died"* (740 B.C.). Uzziah (also called Amaziah) had been a good king for over 50 years (2 Kings 15:1–5; 2 Chron. 26:1–5). Tragically, in his later years he tried, in his arrogance, to act as a priest and was judged by God with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16–21). He had been the best king since the time of Solomon, and his death signaled the permanent decline of the nation. In only about 15 more years, Rome would be founded, which, like its predecessors of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece, would dominate Israel in the time of Christ.

But with the loss of the earthly king, Isaiah was given the vision of the heavenly King who rules forever. The Apostle John speaks of this vision when he wrote, *"These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him."* (John 12:41). The *"Him"* John refers to is Jesus, and so we have the inspired declaration of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The temple that is spoken of is probably the heavenly temple, though some suggest that this vision took place in the Temple in Jerusalem, which is entirely possible. Above the throne were two rows of *Seraphim*, a form of angel mentioned only here. The name comes from the Hebrew, *saraph*, which means "to burn." It is used in Numbers 21:6 of the fiery serpents. It may also be related to the Arabic *Sharafa*, which means "high, exalted." They cover their face and feet as an expression of humility and submission. Their chorus is directed back and forth, as they cry to one another.

These angels appear to have two functions, which are revealed in this passage. The first is the unceasing praise of God, in the refrain, *"Holy, Holy, Holy"* (v. 3). In the Hebrew, a double repetition emphasizes perfection or completeness. Here, the triple designation would imply an infinite degree of holiness. God's holiness is the sum total of His essence and makes Him separate from all created things. The second function is in the assurance of the sinner that confession brings complete and total cleansing.

In Hebrews 1:7 and 14 we read, *"And of His angels He says: who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire ... Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"* These verses seem to imply that it is the Seraphim that are our guardian angels!

Yet, linked to this exaltation of His glory is the truth that *"The whole earth is full of His glory."* In fact, as we are told by both David and Paul, His glory is revealed to us through His creation (Psalm 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–23). Though He is infinitely above us in His holiness, yet He is near us, and reveals Himself to us, through His creation (Matt. 6:26–30).

The chorus of the Seraphim was accompanied with violent shaking of the door posts, and the smoke that filled the Temple could represent both the altar of sacrifice—a picture of the cross of Christ (John 1:29)—or the altar of incense, which represents the prayers of God's people (Rev. 5:8; 8:4).

6:5–7 <u>God's grace applied</u>.
While the glory of God comes by revelation, the grace of God is seen by the work of purification. Nothing can make a soul aware of its own sinfulness like a vision of the glory of God. Compared to other people, we may find cause to boast. But even a small insight into the holiness of God causes us to condemn ourselves as sinful and unclean. It is the plea of the unclean, not the boast of the upright, that calls to the heart of God.

<u>The Vision of God</u>

1. Job staunchly defended his own righteousness until he had a vision of God. Then he repented in dust and ashes (Job 27:6; 29:14; 42:1–6).
2. Daniel is called by God a *"man greatly beloved,"* yet, even a limited vision of God's holiness caused him to "faint as a dead man" (Dan. 10:4–11).
3. Even the beloved disciple John fainted in the presence of the resurrected Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9–17).

It is not self-commendation that God approves of, but the confession of sinfulness that finds His mercy and grace.

In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14), we see the great contrast in perspectives. The Pharisee compares himself to others and concludes that he is better than most. I have met countless men in prisons who will do the same (Prov. 21:2). They will say something like, "I may be a thief, but I have never murdered anyone."

On the other hand, we see the tax collector, who humbly stands before God, ashamed to even raise his eyes to Heaven, beating his chest and saying, *"God, be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13). It was this man, confessing his sinfulness, who Jesus said was justified. Only the humble cry for mercy gives to God the glory He is worthy of!

Isaiah's cry, *"Woe is me, for I am undone!"* is now seen in light of the seven "woes" of Chapter 5, which were directed to his sinful nation. In a simple sentence, he declares himself to be as guilty

as the rest. By confessing his unclean lips, he has acknowledged that he has an unclean heart (Matt. 12:34–37; Psalm 14:1; Prov. 4:23; 10:11; Luke 6:45; Rom. 3:13–14; James 3:5–12).

Amazingly, in response to Isaiah's confession, one of the Seraphs leaves his ranks in praising God and takes a coal from the altar of sacrifice. The coal speaks of sacrifice completed. It is a picture of the work of Christ on the cross, when He declared, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). It is only by the finished sacrifice of Christ that any sinner can be made pure and acceptable in the presence of God. By the application of the fire of judgment, Jesus endured for us the Seraph declares, *"Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged"* (v. 7b).

When God declares one to be clean, the only fitting response is to first believe and rest in His work of grace (1 John 5:10–13), and then to submit in service to Him. This is the essence of the two calls of Jesus in Matthew 11:28–30, and of Paul's dissertation on the love of God in 2 Corinthians 5:14–21.

6:8–13 <u>God's call answered</u>.
There is no doubt that the *"Us"* of verse 8 matches the three-fold *"Holy"* of verse 3. The trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit is anticipated throughout the Old Testament. For example, in Psalm 2:7–12 and Proverbs 30:4, the Son is mentioned, and of course throughout the Old Testament the Spirit is mentioned. Wherever the Spirit is, there is the presence of God (Psalm 139:7).

Isaiah, now cleansed, volunteers for service, *"Here am I! Send me."* His calling was not to be an easy one. Like every commission God gives to men, the success is not measured in the response, but rather in the faithfulness to proclaim the message!

The effect of his message would be the further hardening of the nation (vv. 9–10). When men reject what light they have, the effect of more light is greater blindness. In response to his question, *"how long?"* he was told that it would be until the nation ceased to exist (vv. 11–13).

<u>The Light and the Darkness</u>

1. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. To reject Him is to choose to enter greater darkness (John 1:4–5; 8:12).
2. Anyone who rejects the offer of salvation through faith in Christ in effect declares that they love darkness and hate the light (John 3:16–19).
3. The more one hears and rejects the truth, the greater their spiritual blindness and hardness of heart becomes (Matt. 13:14–15; Eph. 4:17–19).
4. There comes a point, when one persists in hardening their own heart, that God will "give them over" to their desire, and seal them in their hardness (John 12:37–41; Rom. 1:24–32). This is called Judicial Hardening—God's judgment on continued unbelief.
5. Pharoah is the classic example of this judgment. Pharoah was fully conscious and willful in hardening his own heart (Exod. 7:13–14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:34–35). The result of his persistent unbelief was that God sealed him in his hardened condition (Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; 11:1; 14:8).
6. In Romans 9:18, Paul says, *"Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."* This must be seen in the context of Scripture, which tells us that

God desires to show mercy to the humble and that He will judge the proud (Matt. 5:3–10; 1 Pet. 5:5–6; James 4:10).

7. The simple word *"if"* in Scripture declares that mankind has only two options: we can choose the light by faith or remain in darkness by unbelief (Isa. 1:19–20; John 7:37–39).

CLASS SEVEN
Isaiah 7

The Promise of Immanuel
God always offers grace before judgment. In fact, judgment is called God's *"strange act"* (KJV).

> *"For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim* (See 2 Sam. 5:20)*, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon* (See Josh. 10:10–12)*—That He may do His work, His awesome work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual* [strange] *act."*
> Isaiah 28:21

In this passage, in the face of unprecedented judgment on Israel, God sends the promise of the coming of His Son, *"Immanuel"* (v. 14), as the focus of faith for all who would choose to be delivered. But this promise is linked to a warning: that without faith there is no hope (v. 9, see 2 Chron. 20:20). Jesus made the warning even more clear:

> *"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*." John 8:24

Isaiah 7:1–9
Believe or Perish

After the death of King Uzziah, his son Jotham reigned for sixteen years. He was a good and faithful king, according to 2 Kings 15:32–34. He was then followed by his son Ahaz, who was a very wicked and evil king (2 Kings 16:3–4). He sacrificed his own son to Molech and was deeply involved in the demonism of idol worship (1 Cor. 10:20). God will give him one more chance to repent of his evil and come to saving faith.

In vv. 1–2, the king of Syria and the king of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) joined forces against Judah and Jerusalem. The purpose of this threat was to force King Ahaz to join forces with them against the encroaching forces of Assyria. We learn from 2 Kings 16:7–9 that Ahaz made a secret pact with Assyria, in which he plundered the treasury of the Temple to give as tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria.

Where there is no faith, fear will always dominate. The threat of the combined forces of Syria and Israel created such a disturbance in Jerusalem that it was like a mighty wind thrashing the trees in a forest. David knew the power of faith to conquer fear, when he wrote, *"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You"* (Psalm 56:3).

Later, in Isaiah 41:10, the prophet will comfort the hearts of the believers with these words, *"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

Then, in vv. 3–9, God tells Isaiah to meet Ahaz in a specific place, with a specific message. Part of the message is in the name of Isaiah's son, *Shear-Jashub*, which means "a remnant will return," anticipating the return from the exile (Ezra/Nehemiah). The place is the water source for Jerusalem, as well as the place where the women did the laundry. It is suggestive that when we come to Jesus Christ, who is the Living Water (John 7:37–39), we are cleansed of our sins and given eternal life. Also, this is the very ground on which Rabshakeh, the commander of the forces of Assyria would later hurl insults against Hezekiah (Isa. 36:1–2). Then God would deliver them with a mighty supernatural victory.

In v. 4, the first command *"Take heed,"* is a *niphal* imperative, meaning, "receive protection." *"Be quiet"* is a *hiphil* imperative, meaning, "be caused to rest." Security must be received from the Lord. The result is the exhortation *"do not fear."*

Verses 5–9 record God's promise through Isaiah that the looming threat will not succeed, adding the prophecy that within sixty-five years those forces will be destroyed. Isaiah's prophecy here was given in 735 B.C. Within just 13 years, the Northern Kingdom was conquered, and within 62 years, foreign settlers were moved in, creating what we see in the New Testament as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24; 2 Chron. 33:11; Ezra 4:2, 10).

Verse 9 gives the only hope of the Southern Kingdom, *"If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."* The *hiphil* imperfect of the verb *Amen* literally means, "be caused to believe." The immediate cause of faith is always the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Isaih 7:10–16,
The Sign of Immanuel

Here, we see in Ahaz the beginning of the fulfillment of God's warning of the unbelief that Isaiah would meet in his ministry (6:9–10). On being told to ask God for a sign, he responds with phony piety, saying he would not put God to the test. Let's be clear, to test God out of unbelief is evil (Deut. 6:16; John 2:18–19; Heb. 3:7–15). However, to fail to believe when God offers a sign is far greater evil.

Thus, God presents the sign of His choosing (v. 14). This passage is quoted in Matthew 1:21–23, where the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is seen to be its ultimate fulfillment. However, as we have seen, God's prophecies often have both a near and a far fulfillment.

Many have commented that the word *"virgin"* is *alma*, which generally means "a young unmarried woman." The Hebrew word *bethula* is the normal word for virgin. However, in Genesis 24:43, the word *"virgin"* is *alma,* which is later identified as Rebekah. The reason for this usage is probably to signify its dual fulfillment; first through Isaiah's second son, and then through the Lord Jesus Christ. This will become more clarified in Chapter 8.

"Immanuel," of course, means "God with us," and is a promise of divine protection still surrounding the City of Jerusalem. In the near fulfillment of the prophecy, a child will soon be born, who prior to reaching the age of accountability, will see the destruction of the Northern Kings threatening Jerusalem (see 8:4).

Isaiah 7:17–25
The Consequences of Unbelief

In this section, God warns that He is bringing a far worse threat to Judah and Jerusalem than the two Northern kings. He will soon call for both Assyria and Egypt, the world's two superpowers at the time. Egypt was known for its flies, and the Assyrians for their beekeeping. So, God would *"whistle"* for them to come, and they would *"shave"* Jerusalem with a *"razor"* (vv. 18, 20). In those days, slaves were completely shaved of all hair—a symbol of shame and utter defeat.

Verses 21–25 declare that the result will be the loss of livestock (vv. 21–22), reducing the population to eating the food of the poorest of peasants. The rich farmland (vv. 23–25) would be left idle and become thickets of thorns and briars—a place for hunting or grazing, but no longer fit for farming.

The Call to Faith

1. It is most crucial to see that long before God calls for Assyria and Egypt to invade Judah, He calls on all those of "The House of David" to turn to Him in faith.
2. The phrase "House of David" reminds us of the Messianic promise given to David about 300 years earlier, *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"* (2 Sam. 7:12–13).
3. All throughout history, God has been calling men to come to Him in humble faith. The story of the coming Seed of the Woman is echoed down through the pages of Old Testament history.
4. In Genesis 5, we have the preview of the whole Gospel story:
   a. Adam— "Man"
   b. Seth— "Appointed"
   c. Enosh— "Mortal"
   d. Kenan— "Sorrow"
   e. Mahalel— "The Blessed God"
   f. Jared— "Shall come down"
   g. Enoch— "teaching"
   h. Methuselah— "His death shall bring"
   i. Lamech— "The despairing ones"
   j. Noah— "Rest"
5. In Isaiah 55:1 and 3, the prophet anticipates the call of the Lord Jesus Christ:

   "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters ... incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul will live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David."

6. In John 7:37–39, Jesus echoed Isaiah's call to come to the source of living water:

   "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the

Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."