

The Prophets of Judah

Isaiah

God's Case Against His People

Isaiah 3:13
August 15, 2026

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 - *Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Yahweh was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.*

That's how the history of the kingdom of Judah came to an end.

Now we will, once again, wind back the clock to investigate the "words Yahweh sent through his messengers," and we begin with Isaiah.

Isaiah was the son of Amoz. He ministered during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah and there is some evidence to suggest that his ministry lasted into the early reign of Manasseh. Jewish tradition states that Manasseh rejected Isaiah's prophetic work and killed him by placing him in a hollow log that was then sawn in 2 (see Hebrews 11:37).

Isaiah's wife was a prophetess and he had at least 2 sons, whose names have symbolic meaning relating to both salvation and judgment:

- Shear-Jashub – *"a remnant shall return"*
- Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz – *"speed the spoil, hasten the plunder"*

Uzziah's reign marked the height of Judah's power. The people were prosperous and times were good, but looks can be deceiving. As always, God looks below the surface to the motivations of the heart and it was not good news. Judah was complacent and lazy. They traded the God of the Universe for images of wood and stone and precious metal. They practiced witchcraft, burned their children in Molech's fire and exploited the poor, the widow and the stranger. They chose rebellion, yet still considered themselves to be "God's chosen people".

Judah's internal reality was matched only by the trouble coming from the outside – Assyria was on the rise – Fun Facts:

- Tiglath-pileser III became king of Assyria in 745 BC (year 47 of king Uzziah). Under his leadership, Assyria expanded, became a feared military power and implemented the policy of the mass resettlement of conquered peoples. He captured the king of Babylon and declared himself "the king of Babylon" creating a dual monarchy.
- Shalmaneser V became king in 727 BC. He began the siege of Samaria, but died before its destruction.
- Sargon II became king in 722 BC and completed what Shalmaneser V started. Samaria was destroyed and Israel was made into the Assyrian province of Samerina – the majority of the people were deported and non-Israelites were brought in from Babylonia and Syria (see 2 Kings 17).
- Sennacherib became king in 705 BC. He continued the dual Assyrian/Babylonian monarchy, but for a brief 2-year period, Merodach-Baladan raised a rebellion in Babylon, declaring himself king of Babylon. After his failed attempt to take Jerusalem, Sennacherib returned Nineveh. He was assassinated by 2 of his sons in 681 BC.
- Esarhaddon became king in 681 BC and his reign lasted until 669 BC. 57 years later, Assyria was destroyed.

It was during this extraordinary time of internal crisis and military threat that Yahweh called Isaiah to reveal His plan for His people – to discipline and purify them and redeem her remnant people. This grand restoration plan is the unifying feature of the book and the message is relatively simple:

God's people have sinned – He is calling them to repentance and obedience – He will judge them because of their sin – He promises the future restoration of a remnant people.

Finally, Isaiah paints a portrait of God unparalleled in the rest of the Old Testament:

- God's holiness ("*the Holy One of Israel*" 26 times in the book – compared to 6 times in the rest of the OT) which is expressed in His justice and righteousness.
- God's sovereignty over all the earth.
- God's reliability, dependability, faithfulness and trustworthiness – He can be trusted because always keeps His promises.
- God's unfailing love – His "*chesed*" – and commitment to His people. He cares about the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger. He has some things to say to those who take advantage of them and He restores justice.
- God's Messiah – The Redeemer who would come for the deliverance of His people. Some of the most awe-inspiring words ever written regarding this Redeemer are found within the pages of Isaiah's book.

The outline of the book is as follows:

- Visions of Judgment and Salvation (1:1–35:10)
 - God brings a case against His people for their violation of the Covenant and appeals to them to return (1:1–6:13).
 - Prophecies concerning Immanuel (7:1–12:6)
 - Oracles of Judgment against the Nations (13:1–24:23)
 - God's Salvation and Judgments (25:1–35:10)
- Historical Interlude (36:1–39:8)
- Visions of Comfort, Restoration and Judgment (40:1–66:24)
 - Vision of comfort for future exiles and the good news of salvation (40:1–41:29)
 - The Servant of the Lord's mission of Salvation to Israel (42:1–55:13)
 - Salvation of non-Israelites and invitation of covenant relationship (56:1–58:14)
 - Vindication of God, promises of Restoration and Judgment (59:1–66:24)

God brings a case against his people (1:1-6:13)

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For Yahweh has spoken:

I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

Sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken Yahweh; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.

Why do you persist in rebellion? From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—

The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me?

I have more than enough of burnt offerings I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings!

Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations – I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

"Come now, let us reason together," says Yahweh. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

This is important. In the midst of their infidelity, God wants to forgive. He still desires relationship with His people. He desires thinking, maturing people who will choose to engage with him in a meaningful way.

However, that is not what the people want:

The faithful city has become a harlot

She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her – but now murderers!

Its rulers are rebels, companions of thieves

Everyone loves a bribe and chases after gifts.

They do not defend the orphan or the widow

THEREFORE

Yahweh, El Shaddai – the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City." Zion will be redeemed with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness. But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the LORD will perish....

Yet, there remains hope for the future:

Isaiah 2:3-5 - Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of Yahweh.

Now, back to the present....

You have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob, BECAUSE.....

They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and clasp hands with pagans.

Their land is full of silver and gold; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots.

Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made.

To the leaders –

Isaiah 3:14-15 - Yahweh enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: "It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares Yahweh, El Shaddai.

To the people who are acting like prostitutes with the surrounding nations –

Isaiah 3:16-26 – Yahweh says, "The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore, Yahweh will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; Yahweh will make their scalps bald." In that day He will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands

and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.

Yet, another glimmer of hope appears in the midst of judgment. The Messiah is coming:

Isaiah 4:2-6 - *In that day the Branch of Yahweh will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then Yahweh will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.*

And He will be a protective presence – a cloud of smoke by day and a cloud of fire by night, a canopy, a shelter and shade, a refuge and hiding place – for his covenant keeping people – people who are holy – people who are recorded among the living.

Now Isaiah asks his readers for their judgment on the matter:

Isaiah 5:1-5 - *I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 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. "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 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? 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.*

Woe to You:

- To those who expanded their real estate holdings – homes and land – for profit at the expense of other people! You will experience empty houses and poor harvests....
- To those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of Yahweh, no respect for the work of his hands. You will go into exile because you lack this knowledge....

Isaiah 5:15-16 - *So man will be brought low and mankind humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled. But El Shaddai will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.*

- To those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes, They say, "Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it."
- To those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter....
- To those who are wise in their own eyes and think they are clever....
- To those who are masters at mixing drinks and justify wickedness for a bribe and take away justice from the innocent....

THEREFORE

Yahweh's anger is aroused against His people! He will stretch out His hand and strike them! He will whistle for a nation that is far away and they will come running..... They don't get tired. They don't sleep. They're arrows are sharp. They're horses are fast. They are like young roaring lions who lay hold of their prey and devour it. Behold darkness and sorrow is coming!

That is quite a message.

The situation might have seemed hopeless to Isaiah. He might have even considered finding alternate employment. The people didn't want to hear what he had to say, so why continue?

But then comes chapter 6 – and what happened next can only be described as mind-altering

*"In the year king Uzziah died," **Isaiah** writes.*

Isaiah 6:1-8 - ... *"I saw Yahweh seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke."*

How did he react? *"Woe is me!! I am destroyed," he cried as he dropped to his knees.*

Never before had he felt his own sin as keenly as he did in that moment. Not only that, he felt the oppression of the collective sins of the "chosen" who had WILLINGLY and WILLFULLY turned their backs on God.

One of the remarkable facets of God's grace and mercy is what happened next.

One of the seraph's flew to the altar and removed a live coal with a pair of tongs. He then flew to Isaiah, touched his mouth and said, *"This has touched your lips and has removed your guilt. Your sin no longer legally exists."*

Isaiah now stood before Yahweh as if he had never sinned.

Judah's guilt, however, had not been removed.

As Isaiah stood in the presence of Yahweh, it began to dawn on him that there was a conversation going on between the members of the Godhead, *"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"*

Isaiah, the young reluctant soldier had come face to face with El Shaddai and he finally understood what he was being called to do. He was to warn, to plead, to prophesy on behalf of Yahweh. To get the people to return from the edge of the cliff - before it was too late - and experience the life changing forgiveness that he, himself, had just experienced.

In that moment he became the sold-out spokesman God needed. He raised his hand and cried, *"I'll go! Send me!"*

For the next 60 years Isaiah was a bold and courageous voice for God. He preached the messages God gave him and was met with mockery and rejection, but his voice never faltered and his message never changed. After all he had been in the very presence of God!!!

Until Next Time.....