

The PROPHETS of JUDAH

Isaiah – “God with Us”

Matthew 4:12-16

August 22, 2026

Last week, we began the book of Isaiah with God’s case against His people. Even though times were good under King Uzziah, the people were unfaithful and judgment was coming.

Today, we are going to turn our attention to the Prophecies concerning the future Redeemer. But first, a little more history....

Chapter 7 of Isaiah begins by telling us that while Ahaz was king of Judah, Rezin, King of Aram (Syria) and Pekah, King of Israel invaded Judah. They wanted to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria.

Yahweh told Isaiah to take his son, *Shear-Jashub* “a remnant shall return” and go give Ahaz a message of assurance: “Keep calm and don’t be afraid of these 2 burning sticks! Yes, Aram and Ephraim have conspired together and they plan to take Jerusalem setting up another king in your place, however, it will not happen!! If you don’t stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

However, instead of taking Yahweh at his word, Ahaz turned to Assyria.

Yahweh went so far as to offer Ahaz a sign, of his choice, as proof that Yahweh spoke the truth - Ahaz refused.

Isaiah 7:13-17 - *Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, Yahweh himself will give you a sign: The young woman (Hebrew "almah") will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But 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. Yahweh will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah – he will bring the king of Assyria."*

Here we begin to see Isaiah intertwine God’s present activity regarding his people and the promise of a future Redeemer.

The prophecy had real-time implications because the invading army was real and Ahaz was afraid. God was giving Ahaz the chance to anchor his trust in God’s deliverance, but again, Ahaz rejected the offer. As we know from our historical study, not long after this prophecy was declared, Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Damascus and invaded Israel – breaking the alliance between Rezin and Pekah. But instead of being Judah’s savior, Assyria will be a thorn in her side until the destruction of Sennacherib’s army.

Yet, the prophecy also looked deep into the future. In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth (1:18-25), when Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, he contemplated quietly divorcing her until an angel told him that her child was from the Holy Spirit and he did so by quoting Isaiah 7:14.

In the dreadful aftermath of the Assyrian invasion, comes the next passage to proclaim the “Good News” of deliverance.

Isaiah 9:1-7 - *Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan - The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.... 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. Of the increase of his government and*

peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of El Shaddai will accomplish this.

This prophecy also looked deep into the future. Jesus' ministry began in Galilee and Matthew again quoted Isaiah in describing that work.

- **Matthew 4:12-16** - *When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali--to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles--the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."*

Isaiah's primary message was to Judah, however, chapters 9:8-10:19 are all about Israel and Assyria.

The list of charges against Israel is long and because of her refusal to listen, God will judge Israel and he will use Assyria as His instrument of judgment and discipline.

Assyria's job was to remove Israel's pride and self-reliance and reminder of her need for Yahweh. However, Assyria sought to destroy instead. Yahweh accused Assyria of excessive destruction and brutality, robbery, arrogance and self-exaltation. Assyria crossed the boundary God had set for them and they, too, would be judged according to their deeds.

There is no gentle segway following the declaration of the downfall of Assyria. Isaiah simply resumes and elaborates on the coming Redeemer.

***Isaiah 11:2-10** - The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh – and he will delight in the fear of Yahweh. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*

Old Testament prophets often described earthly kingdoms as mighty trees (Ezekiel 31:3; Daniel 4:10-22; Amos 2:9). When Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, the kingdom of David came to an end – only a stump and roots remained. When Jesus was born, a shoot came from that dead stump and it would become a Mighty - eternal - Tree.

Paul would quote Isaiah 11:10 in describing his global mission (Romans 15:8-12).

Another feature of this prophecy is that of a Spirit-anointed Redeemer who would judge in righteousness and faithfulness. Matthew described the moment the heavens opened and the dove rested on Jesus – declaring the beginning of his ministry (Matthew 3:16).

Finally, along with the verses in chapter 11 that describe the wolf/lamb, leopard/goat, calf/lion, child/viper, etc., all living in harmony together, Isaiah also looked forward to a new heaven and new earth (65:17), which John also looked forward to:

- **Revelation 21:1-3** - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...."*

Isaiah 24 is a prophecy of judgment against the whole earth, which leads to a stirring prophecy in 25:6-9 of victory over death that Christ would win by his own death.

- **1 Corinthians 15:54** - *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*
- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** - *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*
- **Revelation 21:4-5** - *.... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Chapters 36-39 of Isaiah are historical, but in chapter 40 the tone of the book changes again and becomes more gospel-centered

Isaiah 40:1-5 - *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 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. A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

All 4 Gospels make use of this passage in describing the mission and ministry of John the Baptist.

Beginning in Chapter 42, Isaiah begins to elaborate on the mission of Yahweh's Redeemer in a series of poems known as "The Servant Songs".

The 1st Song – The Chosen Servant:

Isaiah 42:1-9 - *Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. "He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk in it, "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth, I proclaim them to you."*

- **Matthew 11:2-5** - *Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."*
- **Matthew 12:15-21** - *But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to make Him known, in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope."*

The 2nd Song – The Mission of the Servant:

Isaiah 49:1-13 - *Listen to Me, O islands, and pay attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother, He named Me. ² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me, and He has also made Me a select arrow; He has hidden Me in His quiver. ³ And He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory." ⁴ But I said, "I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely the justice due to Me is with the LORD, and My reward with My God." ⁵ And now says the LORD, who formed Me from*

the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength),⁶ He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, "Kings shall see and arise, Princes shall also bow down; Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You."⁸ Thus says the LORD, "In a favorable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;⁹ Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' Along the roads they will feed, and their pasture will be on all bare heights.¹⁰ "They will not hunger or thirst, neither will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them, and will guide them to springs of water.¹¹ "And I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up.¹² "Behold, these shall come from afar; And lo, these will come from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Sinim."¹³ Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted.

- **Luke 2:25-32** - *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,²⁹ "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word;³⁰ For my eyes have seen Thy salvation,³¹ Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,³² A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel."*
- **John 8:12** - *Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."*
- **Acts 13:44-47** - *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*

The 3rd Song – The Obedient Servant:

Isaiah 50:4-11 - *The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I shall not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. Behold, the Lord God helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them. Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand; And you will lie down in torment.*

- **Matthew 26:65-68** - *Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death!" Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"*
- **John 6:38** - *For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.*
- **Philippians 2:8** - *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

The climax of these poems is "The Song of the Suffering Servant" which has been called the most important text in the Old Testament and is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passage.

The 4th Song – The Suffering Servant:

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 - *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness -- so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.... Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 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. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 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. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

- **Matthew 8:16-17** - *And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases."*
- **Mark 15:27-28** - *And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."*
- **Acts 8:29-35** - *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth. "In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth." And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.*
- **1 Peter 2:21-24** - *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

When we come to the life of Jesus, the importance of these passages becomes clear. The Jews of Jesus' time expected a conquering Messiah, who would free them from Roman oppression and restore Israel to its rightful place among the nations. But Jesus taught that the true mission of the Messiah was different from their expectations.

The Messiah was not coming as a conquering general, but as a specifically chosen, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Servant who would establish justice and righteousness on the earth. His salvation would reach to the ends of the earth – not just the borders of Palestine. He would accomplish His mission through obedience and He would bring salvation from sin through personal suffering. And in the end, He would be exalted above the nations.

What's super important for us to understand is that this Servant was not a victim of circumstances. He willingly chose obedience. He willingly chose suffering.

- **Hebrews 12:2** - *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

He was glorified because he suffered. He was exalted because he suffered. The humiliation and exaltation belong together.

- **Revelation 5:7** – *Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.*

He was both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God.

Finally, in Isaiah 61:1-3 we read these words - "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...."

Nearly 750 years later, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus walked into His local synagogue on Sabbath morning and stood up to read:

Luke 4:17-21 - *The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Isaiah is one of the most important books in all Scripture because, amongst all the "Bad News" of judgment, he announced the "Good News" of Yahweh's Redeemer - a Redeemer for the whole world.

Isaiah 12:1-6 - *In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."*

Until Next Time.....