**ISAIAH**

**The Lord Saves**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

The grand theme of the Bible is the description of how God is working through human history to restore His creation to its original factory settings. The history of the nation of Israel dominates much of the Bible because God decided their nation would create the context in which the Agent of Restoration, Jesus, would be born, live and die.

In our walk through the Bible, we have already journeyed through the historical books of Genesis through Esther, and the wisdom/poetical books of Job through the Song of Solomon. We now enter the realm of the prophets with the book of Isaiah.

**What you need to KNOW:**

A prophet is someone who acts as a mouthpiece for God. They communicate a message they have directly received from Him. There are two basic types of prophetic messages, ‘forthtelling’ and ‘foretelling.’ ‘Forthtelling’ is speaking-forth, or speaking-out, God’s message into a particular situation. ‘Foretelling’ reveals something that will happen in the future. The purposes of prophesies are varied, but they are commonly given to bring warning, correction, perspective, encouragement, and/or hope. The prophesies contained in the book of Isaiah include all of these aspects.

The Prophet Isaiah lived in the 8th Century BC. He came of age during the reign of King Uzziah. Under Uzziah, Isaiah received a good education and made a good living. He was a family man with a wife and two boys. In fact, during this period of Israel’s history most of the people were secure and prosperous because King Uzziah was a competent and trusted leader. He reigned for 52-years making him the only ruler most of the people had ever known. However, change was coming and it was going to be a hard adjustment.

The book begins with the ‘forthtelling’ of God’s evaluation of the people. He noted that they were prosperous and religious, but they had a fundamental flaw. They had forgotten that although they ‘owned much,’ they were also ‘owned by God.’ And that they had failed to live with an inner passion for God that translated into compassion for the needy.

Then, in chapters 2-3, there is a ‘foretelling’ that God will correct the issue and reestablish His complete control over His good earth. This prediction is summed up in the opening line of chapter 3 when it said, *“The Lord is about to take from society all supply and support: all supplies of food and water.”* The basic framework and infrastructure of their society was going to collapse. What follows are mostly prophesies of criticism, condemnation and impending judgement. The language is vivid, filled with rich imagery describing both the great love God has for His people, as well as, impending judgment due to their failure to live with heartfelt devotion to God and care for their fellow man.

The change begins in Chapter 6 with the death of King Uzziah followed by a fantastic vision given to Isaiah of the Lord seated on His heavenly throne. The meaning of these parallel events is clear, the throne of their earthly king was vacated but the Lord still occupied His heavenly throne! Any misplaced hope in a human leader is replaced by hope in the Eternal King! The experience gives Isaiah a clear understanding of God’s transcendence and purity. Isaiah is moved to confess his sinfulness. God forgives Isaiah and makes it clear that He needs someone to represent Him to the people so that they, too, would confess their sins and receive forgiveness. Isaiah volunteers for the job, creating a defining moment for both himself and the nation as a whole.

Thus began, Isaiah’s 44-year career of prophetically speaking to the people during the reigns of four subsequent human kings. Isaiah’s job wasn’t easy, as it required the delivery of a lot of unpopular and harsh information to a bunch of people who didn’t want to hear it. However, the negative messages were given in the hope of a positive response in the lives of the people. The positive outcome God was angling for is found in the meaning of Isaiah’s name, which is “Yahweh Saves,” or, “The Lord Saves.” Only the Almighty Lord, the Eternal King, can save – place your hope in Him.

And, it’s from this historical context that Isaiah ‘foretells’ how the salvation of the whole earth will eventually be accomplished. This is seen in the four major themes of the book of Isaiah:

1. The LIGHT.

God is seen as the light of life. Light that exposes unseemly hidden things, but who is also the giver of life, guidance and comfort.

1. A ROCK.

God is portrayed as a sure, stable rock; a firm foundation, the rock of salvation. And, also, a stone of stumbling that causes those that do not rely on his light to trip and fall on as they stumble in the darkness of sin.

1. A BRANCH.

God is seen as the owner of a field who plants and tends a productive and beautiful vineyard that is meant to produce a bounty of sustenance. And, also, the one who will cut away lifeless and fruitless branches that refuse to submit to the Gardener’s care.

And, it’s kind of strange, because the themes of the Light, the Rock, and the Branch all relate to each other in an unexpected way. They all point to the fourth theme which is:

1. A CHILD.

Echoing the pledge God made in Genesis 3:15 when he told the serpent that an offspring of the woman would ***“crush your head, even though you will strike His heal.”***Isaiah’s prophesies ‘foretold’ that the final salvation of the world will come through the birth of a Child. ***Isaiah prophesied in 7:14, “The Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’)”***

A Child who would Shine the Light so that all the world would be led out of the darkness of sin and be guided to the God Who Saves.

A Child who would Be the Rock on which all the world could safely build a life that will last.

A Child who would reestablish God’s lush and beautiful Garden, paradise on earth, as it was at the beginning.

And, it didn’t happen for another 700 years, but as Isaiah ‘foretold,’ eventually, that Child was born. And, that Child became a teacher who said: ***“I am the LIGHT of the World.”*** And, ***“Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the ROCK.”*** And, ***“I am the true VINE, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn’t produce fruit…Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”***

**GET GOING!**

**Isaiah is the third longest book in the Bible, as such, you might opt to take a hop, skip and a jump instead of reading the whole thing. If you decide to skim the book, be sure to drill into Chapters 1-9, 35, 40, 43, 53, 61, and 66.**