

## Isaiah & the Promise

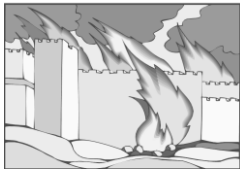


### The “Great Nation” Falls

Under Kings David and Solomon, Israel became a “great nation” (*Genesis 12:2*).<sup>1</sup> However, before Israel entered the Promised Land, God warned them. If they disobeyed God and turned to other gods, the Israelites would be cursed, uprooted from the land and dispersed (*Deuteronomy 29:9-28*). This warning was repeated to King Solomon after he dedicated the temple (*1 Kings 9:6-9*). However, Solomon took hundreds of wives who worshiped other gods. Solomon’s heart was turned toward these gods and away from the one true God (*1 Kings 11:1-6*).

God told Solomon, “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you... Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him...” (*11:11-13a, NIV*)

After Solomon died, the kingdom was torn apart (*in 931/930 BC*).<sup>2</sup> Solomon’s son Rehoboam retained one tribe (Judah),<sup>3</sup> but the northern tribes (called “Israel”) broke away under the reign of Jeroboam (*1 Kings 11:29-39*). Judah continued to be ruled by the descendants of David as God had promised. However, most of the kings in both Judah and Israel were corrupt and did evil.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.



### Bad News & Good News

During the time of the Israelites’ rebellion, God was still speaking to Israel and Judah. He spoke through his “prophets.”<sup>5</sup> A “prophet” is a:

- ✎ forth-teller: who proclaims God’s word for the present day
- ☞ fore-teller: who speaks of the future, as it relates to the present

The prophets brought bad news and good news. The bad news was God’s judgment because of their sin. The good news was God’s blessing because of His grace. Both God’s judgment and God’s blessing were demonstrations of His faithfulness to His promises and covenants.

### Isaiah the Prophet

Isaiah is probably the most famous writing prophet. Most scholars date Isaiah’s prophetic ministry around 740-690 BC. He prophesied mainly to Judah, though he also spoke concerning Israel and other nations.

<sup>1</sup> God’s promise to Abraham was temporally fulfilled during Solomon’s reign (*1 Kings 8:56*). See Lesson 10.

<sup>2</sup> Factors in the kingdom’s division included strife (disagreement, conflict) among the tribes (*Joshua 8:1-3; 12:1-6; 2 Samuel 2:10-11; 3:1*) and Solomon’s heavy taxation and forced labor, which Rehoboam made worse (*1 Kings 12:1-19*).

<sup>3</sup> Judah, the southern kingdom, included Judah, Simeon and a portion of Benjamin (*2 Chronicles 11:1-12*).

<sup>4</sup> None of the 19 kings of the northern kingdom (Israel) were considered ‘good.’ In Judah, out of 20 kings, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, & Josiah were relatively good; and Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah & Jotham were not too bad.

<sup>5</sup> See *Times of the Prophets*, which provides a timeline for the writing prophets relative to the kings of Judah and Israel (included in the hardcopy version of this handout).

Go to page 3 for discussion questions.

**Isaiah 1:2-4** (NIV)

...concerning Judah and Jerusalem...

Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!

For the LORD has spoken:

"I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me. (2)

The ox knows its master,  
the donkey its owner's manger,  
but Israel does not know,  
my people do not understand." (3)

Woe to the sinful nation,  
a people whose guilt is great,  
a brood of evildoers,  
children given to corruption!

They have forsaken the LORD;  
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel  
and turned their backs on him. (4)

**Isaiah 1:11-13** (NIV)

"The multitude of your sacrifices –  
what are they to me?" says the LORD.

"I have more than enough of burnt offerings,  
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;  
I have no pleasure in  
the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. (11)

When you come to appear before me,  
who has asked this of you,  
this trampling of my courts? (12)

Stop bringing meaningless offerings!  
Your incense is detestable to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations –  
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies." (13)

**Isaiah 6:11-13** (NIV)

Then I said, "For how long, Lord?"

And he answered:

"Until the cities lie ruined  
and without inhabitant,  
until the houses are left deserted  
and the fields ruined and ravaged, (11)  
until the LORD has sent everyone far away  
and the land is utterly forsaken. (12)

And though a tenth remains in the land,  
it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak  
leave stumps when they are cut down,  
so the holy seed will be the  
stump in the land." (13)



**Isaiah 11:1-2** (NIV)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. (1)

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him –  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of  
the LORD. (2)

**Isaiah 11:10-12** (NIV)

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a  
banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to  
him, and his resting place will be glorious. (10)

In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a  
second time to reclaim (bring back) the surviving  
remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower  
Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam;  
from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from the  
islands of the Mediterranean. (11)

He will raise a banner for the nations  
And gather the exiles of Israel;  
he will assemble (gather) the scattered people of  
Judah from the four quarters of the earth. (12)

**Isaiah 49:5-6** (NIV)

And now the LORD says –  
he who formed me in the womb to be his  
servant

to bring Jacob back to him  
and gather Israel to himself,  
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD  
and my God has been my strength – (5)  
he says:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my  
servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that my salvation to may reach to the ends  
of the earth." (6)

## Bad News & Good News

Please note that referenced Bible verses are copied on page 2.

### The Problem

1. Read Isaiah 1:2-4 & 1:11-13. Based on these verses, what are Judah's (and Israel's) problems?

They have \_\_\_\_\_ against God. (1:2) They do not know their master.<sup>6</sup> (1:3)

They are sinful. (1:4) They have \_\_\_\_\_ the LORD. (1:4)

Their religious activities are \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>7</sup> (1:11-13)



### God's Response to the Problem

2. Isaiah 6 records Isaiah's commission. Isaiah is assigned a difficult ministry because as he preaches, the people will only become more rebellious. So Isaiah asks a question. Read Isaiah 6:11-13. What will happen to Judah? How does God demonstrate his faithfulness?<sup>8</sup>

3. Read Isaiah 11:1-2 & 11:10-12 (copied on page 2). Again, how does God demonstrate his faithfulness?<sup>9</sup>

- "a shoot...from the stump of Jesse" refers to David's family line. Jesse was David's father. (Remember God's promise to David.)

### The Servant of the LORD<sup>10</sup>

4. Read Isaiah 49:5-6. What is important besides the restoration of Israel? How does this relate to "God's promise for the nations?"<sup>11</sup>



<sup>6</sup> The ox and the donkey are not considered to be smart, but even they know who cares for them and where they belong. To 'know' (*yada*) and 'understand' (*bin*) involves more than intellectual knowledge. It involves experience and relationship. This is fundamental, and is no different for us today. We must seek to know God through Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere God says, 'These people ... honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me' (*Isaiah 29:13*).

<sup>8</sup> They will be removed from the Land (*6:11-12, cp. Deuteronomy 28:20-21; 29:28*). Though the desolation will be complete, there will be 'holy seed' (offspring set apart for God) (*6:13*). God is faithful to fulfill his promises.

<sup>9</sup> A ruler will be raised up from the line of David (*11:1-5*). The Jews looked forward to this future, ideal king – the Messiah (Anointed One, Christ). God will gather his people and bring them back to the Promised Land (*11:10-12*). Elsewhere Isaiah describes the wonderful conditions of the Messiah's perfect rule (e.g., *Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25*).

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah speaks a lot about the 'servant of the LORD.' Sometimes the servant is Israel. Sometimes the servant is the Messiah (Christ). Sometimes it seems the servant is both, but in such cases the Messiah is the ideal Israel. He is the model for the people of God. Most scholars agree that the servant in Isaiah 49:1-6 refers to the Messiah.

<sup>11</sup> The 'Gentiles' ('nations') – those who are not ethnic Jews. It is 'too small a thing' for the servant to restore the Jews to the land. He has a much greater task: saving the world! God promised Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through his offspring (*Genesis 12:3; 18:18*). Jesus Christ is 'the light of the world' (*John 9:5*).

God is called the "Redeemer of Israel" (*Isaiah 49:7*).

5. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Who is "the servant" in this passage (*Acts 8:30-35*)? What price does God pay to redeem<sup>12</sup> his people from their sins?

## The Price of Redemption

Jesus Christ came to pay the price of redemption. Speaking of himself, he said...

📖 "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (redemption price) for many." (*Mark 10:45*)



About 700 years before Jesus made this statement, Isaiah spoke of a suffering servant (*52:13-53:12*). Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus in amazing detail. Why did Jesus suffer and die?

- † He took up our pain (griefs) and bore our suffering (sorrows) (*Isaiah 53:4*).
- † He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (sins) (*Isaiah 53:5a*).
- † The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed (*Isaiah 53:5b*).
- † The LORD laid on him the iniquity (sin) of us all (*Isaiah 53:6*).
- † The LORD made his life an offering for sin (*Isaiah 53:10b*).
- † He bore the iniquities and sin of many (*Isaiah 53:11b, 12b*).



Jesus Christ never sinned, but as the supreme Servant, he gave his life to release sinners according to the plan of God.

## Reflection & Application

- The people of Israel did not know God as their Master and Caretaker. Their relationship with God was lacking. What is *your* relationship with God?
- The people did their religious activities, but their hearts were far from God. Thus God said their religious activities were meaningless. How meaningful are your "religious activities?"
- In his love, Jesus paid the price that we could never pay so we could be restored to God. Isaiah spoke about this. Reflect on Isaiah 52:13-53:12. We receive the benefits of what Jesus did by confessing our sin and need, and trusting in Jesus as Savior. Do you need to do that?
- Isaiah was given an assignment. Though people did not respond to Isaiah's preaching, he remained faithful to God's assignment. As Christians, what can we learn from this?
- The servant of the LORD would to be "a light for the Gentiles (nations)." Jesus Christ came into the world and said, "I am the light of the world" (*John 8:12*). As Christians, we are Christ's representatives. Thus Jesus says to his disciples, "You are the light of the world" (*Matthew 5:14*). Brothers and sisters, in what ways are you being a "light for the nations?"

<sup>12</sup> The word 'redeem' and its derivatives are used 22 times in Isaiah. To 'redeem' literally means to 'buy back.' The Bible uses the term as a metaphor to describe God's merciful and costly action on behalf of His people. In particular, Jesus Christ said that he came to give his life as a 'ransom.' A 'ransom' is a price paid for release from captivity and/or punishment. The purchase price was the 'blood of Christ' (that is, Christ's sacrifice of his life). Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God (restored to relationship with Him).