

Lesson 31
Isaiah 65:1 – 66:24
God is the source of Salvation

Memory verse: "if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2. Chron.7:14 NIV)

Isaiah ministered and wrote to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. His task was to explain to these chosen people that the old world order was passing away and that the new order- controlled by Gentile world empires that sought to swallow Judah up - required a new commitment for Israel to trust and obey God as His "servant" nation. The Assyrian threat called for this new dedication. This was a theological even more than a historical and political crisis for Judah. It raised many questions that Isaiah addressed.

The far-reaching nature of these questions called for reference to the future, which Isaiah revealed from the Lord. The Northern Kingdom had made the wrong commitment, which Amos denounced, but the Southern Kingdom still had an opportunity to trust God and live.

Isaiah presented God as great, transcendently separate, authoritative, omnipotent, majestic, holy, and morally and ethically perfect. In contrast, he described sarcastically the stupidity of idolatry. God creates history as well as the cosmos, and He has a special relationship with Israel among the nations. The adjective "holy" (Heb. qadosh) describes God 33 times in Isaiah, but only 26 times in the rest of the Old Testament. Holiness is the primary attribute of God that this prophet stressed.

Sin is rebellion, for Isaiah, that springs from pride. The book begins and ends on this note (1:2; 66:24). All the evil in the world results from man's refusal to accept God's Lordship. The prophet repeatedly showed how foolish such rebellion is. It not only affects man himself but also his environment. God's response to sin is judgment if people continue to rebel against Him, but He responds with redemption if they abandon self-trust and depend on Him. Sin calls for repentance, and forgiveness for the penitent is available.

Perhaps, the fitting theme of Isaiah is the salvation of God. It has been called "the Gospel according to Isaiah" because in it the good news of eternal salvation, not just national restoration, is clear and appealing. The need for salvation is also clear, as is the divine provision of salvation in justification, sanctification, and glorification. The agent of God's provision of salvation in all its aspects is the Servant of the Lord. People have come to salvation through passages in Isaiah alone (e.g., 1:18; 44:22; 45:22; ch. 53; 64:6). Isaiah, then, is very similar to Romans in its emphasis on salvation.

Here is a summary of what Isaiah predicted about the coming Messiah. He would possess both human and divine natures. He would be virgin born. He would conduct an earthly ministry. He would perform miracles. He would die, and He would die as a substitute sacrifice for humanity. He would rise from the dead. He would intercede with God for needy human beings. His career would include both suffering and glory. Isaiah also clarified His relationships to Israel, the nations, creation, war, peace, and world government. The Book of Isaiah provides unusually great insight into the person and work of Christ, compared to other Old Testament books.

Isaiah's writing style is the highest in Hebrew literature. The book is mentioned at least 80 times in the New Testament, second only to the Psalms in frequency. Isaiah arranged his prophecies basically chronologically, but also thematically. The book touches all the major doctrines of the Bible except the church. The unity of the book is the main question among critics of it. The prophet also strongly stressed the importance of holiness (personal righteousness) in our lives. And the book provides a plan of salvation that is especially effective with Jewish people, in view of its emphasis on the salvation that God provides.

Isaiah's name, "The Lord (Yahweh) is salvation," meaning the Lord is the source of salvation, summarizes his message.

Scripture reading: Isaiah Chapter: Isaiah 65:1-7, 17-25; 66:5-14.

Things to learn: 1) Unanswered Prayers 2) Blessing of a New Creation 3) Birth of the New Nation

Discussion Questions:

Q1. Discuss God's response to the cry for deliverance of chapter 64 and declaration of a new creation found in chapter 65.

Q2. As the book ends, what did God say about true worshippers, rebels and Israel as a nation in Chapter 66?

Q3. "Perhaps the most enduring lessons from the Book of Isaiah are the reminders that (a) there is a God, (b) He is coming back, and (c) our eternal destiny is determined by our response to Him in this life." Dyer. Perhaps you would like to share your view of God after studying the book of Isaiah.