

Lesson 2
Isaiah 1
Indictment and Invitation

Memory verse: “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” (Psalms 51:17 NIV)

This is the book of the prophesies of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who ministered from about 740 to 680 B.C. For about 20 years, he spoke to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. After Israel's fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C., Isaiah continued to prophesy to Judah. This period of Israel's history is told in 2 Kings 15 through 21 and 2 Chronicles 26 through 33. Isaiah was a contemporary of the prophets Hosea and Micah. By the time of Isaiah, the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, and Amos had already completed their ministry.

By this time, Israel had been in the Promised Land for almost 700 years. The first 400 years in Canaan, Israel was ruled by judges, spiritual, military, and political leaders God raised up as the occasion demanded. Then, for about 120 years, three kings reigned over all Israel: Saul, David, and Solomon. But in 917 B.C. Israel had a civil war, and remained divided into two nations, Israel (to the north) and Judah (to the south) up until the time of Isaiah.

Up until the time of Isaiah, the northern nation of Israel had some 18 kings - all of them bad, and rebellious against the LORD. The southern nation of Judah had some 11 kings before Isaiah's ministry, some good and some bad.

In the time of Isaiah, Israel was a little nation often caught in the middle of the wars between three superpowers: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

As Isaiah's ministry began, there was a national crisis in the northern nation of Israel. The superpower of Assyria was about to engulf the nation of Israel. During the span of his ministry as a prophet, the southern nation of Judah was faced with repeated threats from the larger surrounding nations.

The prophecy of this chapter probably took place in the time of Ahaz, king of Judah (2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28). Ahaz was an evil king who was invaded many times by surrounding nations.

The first thing you must know about prophets is that their ministry focuses on the present as well as on the future. They “tell forth” the Word of God as well as “foretell” the works of God. True prophets are like good doctors: They diagnose the case, prescribe a remedy, and warn the patient what will happen if the prescription is ignored. (See Jer. 6:14; 8:11.) When prophets declare a vision of the future, they do it to encourage people to obey God today. Peter stated this principle when he wrote, “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11 NKJV).

Unlike Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah did not begin his book with an account of his call to ministry. This he gave in chapter 6. Instead, he started with a probing examination of Judah's present situation and gave a passionate plea for God's people to return to the Lord. As you read his analysis, note how closely it parallels our situation in the modern world.

Things to learn: 1) A rebellious people 2) A religious people 3) A redemptive God

Discussion Questions:

1) How did God describe His sinful people in verses 2 to 9 and is there any difference with the world today?

2) What has God to say about the religious people in the day of Isaiah from verses 10 to 15 and are there any warnings to churchgoers today?

3) Why do you think God would still want to reason with the rebellious and sinful nation of Judah and even the world today (as in verses 16 to 31)?