

# ISAIAH

## Part 1 - Chapters 1-39

### Why Isaiah 1-39?

Isaiah 1-39 is a complete section in itself. It is focused on the residents of Judah. There are many warnings about destruction to come if God's people do not change their ways and acknowledge God as God. Chapters 40-55 address the concerns and doubts of people in exile who now experience the defeat of Jerusalem and life in a foreign land. The last ten chapters of Isaiah speak to those who return from Exile and now await a better future, the fulfillment of God's promises.

Isaiah 1-39 is called First Isaiah. Isaiah 40-55 is Second Isaiah. Isaiah 56-66 is Third Isaiah.

### Tips on reading Isaiah

1. Isaiah is poetry. It is beautiful and powerful. Do not worry about understanding details. It is enough to sense the awesome glory and authority of God.
2. There is a historical context. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the time of kings Uzziah (Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. You can read more about them in II Kings 15-20 and II Chronicles 26-32. There are very threatening events and periods of ease but little genuine change. The northern kingdom Israel was defeated by Assyria and the people taken into exile, but Judah survives until after Isaiah 39.
3. You may find a map handy, especially for chapters 13-23, which are about the lands around Judah.

As Christians, we find Jesus everywhere in Isaiah. Yet until Jesus' resurrection - and indeed for Jews today - this prophet had important messages. Try reading Isaiah without thinking about Jesus. You will find God at work in powerful ways. For example, Isaiah refers often to the story of the Exodus from Egypt to the promised land to remind people of God's presence in uncertain times.

### Famous References to Jesus

Early Bible commentators and teachers such as Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine regarded Isaiah as the first and greatest prophet and the first and greatest apostle. Isaiah has so many prophecies and allusions which are fulfilled in Jesus that it became known as the Fifth Gospel. The entire book of Isaiah is quoted more than any other prophet in the New Testament, with a total of **53 times**. He is quoted (or alluded to) in the Gospels approximately 21 times, 25 times in Paul's letters, 6 times in 1 Peter, 5 times in Acts, 4 times in Revelation, and once in Hebrews.

During Advent and Christmas, this first section of Isaiah is often quoted. The latter chapters include the eloquent passages about God's suffering servant which are quoted to describe Jesus' suffering and death.

Here are passages that we read at Christmas:

### Isaiah 1:1-3

When cattle and donkey appear in the nativity scenes they witness to Jesus as Lord and Master.

*The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib.*

### Isaiah 7:10-14

Jesus is born to a young woman, a virgin.  
*Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.*

### Isaiah 9:1-7

A child is born for us, a son is given to us.  
*The people who dwell in darkness have seen a great light...He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

### Isaiah 11:1-10

The messiah will be a descendant of King David (whose father was Jesse).  
*A shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall come out of his roots...*