

## Isaiah 1A

- Isaiah was probably most important OT prophet
  - Therefore Isaiah is one of only a few books of the Bible that by itself can teach virtually everything we can know concerning God's plan for the redemption of the world
    - At least from the perspective of Israel
  - His book is a work of superlatives
    - In terms of language, Isaiah was a master of Hebrew
      - He was without peer in the OT,
      - His writing demonstrates a unparalleled command of Hebrew using a wide vocabulary and frequent use of poetic language
      - He makes frequently use of extended doublets, which are a repetition of the same truth in consecutive steps
      - Shakespeare of the Hebrew language
    - In terms of breadth, Isaiah is the third longest work in the Bible after Psalms and Jeremiah
      - Isaiah's describes his writing as a vision God gave him over the course of His lifetime
        - Hebrew name: The Vision of Isaiah
      - Different than some prophets who received the word of the Lord
        - Isaiah saw the future and wrote from that perspective
    - In terms of depth, Isaiah provides more insight on the coming kingdom of the Messiah than any other book of the Bible, including Revelation
      - Addresses both past and future events, revealing events covering a span of human history longer than any book other than Genesis and Revelation

- I hope you're excited about study a prophet, because here is God's revealing to you and I details about our future
- In terms of structure, Isaiah's organization closely mirrors the Bible as a whole
  - This structure is a testimony to God's sovereignty and to the importance God placed upon Isaiah within the canon of scripture
  - There are 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT
    - Similarly, Isaiah chapters 1-39 carry one theme matched to the OT
    - While Chapters 40-66 carry a different theme
    - In fact, it was commonly referred to as First and Second Isaiah
  - Not surprisingly, most Christians will recognize many of Isaiah's later chapters corresponding to the NT but are almost completely unfamiliar with many of his earlier chapters
- In terms of theology, the book is simply profound
  - In some respects, Isaiah could be said to be the Romans of the OT
  - He presents a rich tapestry of Biblical concepts
    - Four primary doctrines: Sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of man and the world, the inevitability of judgment and the coming redemption
  - He presented the Messiah with greater insight and detail than any other book save perhaps Psalms
  - The entire book is strongly eschatological
- Isaiah the man is also a fascinating study
  - He lived from about 740 BC to 681 BC, writing the book in the last years of his life

- He lived in Jerusalem, and prophesied during the reign of four Kings of Judah
  - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, which he identifies in 1:1

[Is. 1:1](#) ¶ The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

- Tradition says his father was brother to King Amaziah, who preceded King Uzziah
  - Which means he was of Royal blood, though not in the line for king
- Isaiah lived at the critical point in Israel's history
  - When Isaiah began his ministry under King Uzziah, Judah and Israel commanded a greater area than even David or Solomon had controlled
    - In human terms, it would seem that Jewish authority and power was unquestionable and only likely to grow greater
  - It enabled Jews to rest in a prideful belief that there were achieving in their earthly success all that could be expect from God's promises
    - This reliance on self and pride destroyed these nations from the inside out
    - Does this sound like other world powers - past or present?
- Looking back, we can see that Isaiah's time was actually the transition from the OT and Law to the NT and the Messiah
  - Politically, the old world order was passing away
    - New Gentile powers were about to rise and swallow up Israel and later Judah
  - Assyria was gaining power in the north and loomed as a threat to both Israel and Judah
    - Edward Young said of Isaiah's time:

Isaiah exercised his prophetic ministry at a time of unique significance, a time in which it was of utmost importance to realize that salvation could not be obtained by reliance upon man but only from God Himself. For Israel it was the central or pivotal point of history between Moses and Christ. The old world was passing and an entirely new order of things was beginning to make its appearance. Where would Israel stand in that new world? Would she be the true theocracy, the light to lighten the Gentiles, or would she fall into the shadow by turning for help to the nations which were about her?

- Isaiah also lived on the brink of the times of the Gentiles
  - A period of judgment for Israel
    - It was later described by Daniel chapters 2 and 7 and 9
    - It's further defined by Jesus in Luke 17
    - It is a time when the Jews find their beloved city trampled under by Gentile oppressors
  - This age began with Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and continues to today
    - Daniel declared that it won't be finished until Christ's return
- Isaiah speaks of this coming judgment frequently while at the same time giving more detail about that future time of redemption than any other prophet
- Isaiah's ministry brought it's own trials
  - Isaiah had a wife, who was called a prophetess, and two sons whose names had prophetic meaning
    - The sons names meant the prey hastens and remnant
  - In chapter 20, Isaiah is told by God to walk naked and barefoot for three years in Israel, which he does to establish a picture for Egypt and Cush that they would be led naked into captivity by Assyria
    - I wonder what his wife thought of Isaiah's idea to walk about naked
  - He was martyred tradition says fleeing King Manasseh, one of the worst kings in all Judah
    - Isaiah hid in the hollow of a tree

- When soldiers found him, they executed him by sawing in two the tree he was hiding in, causing Isaiah to be sawn in two as well
  - Heb 11 speaks of such an event without naming Isaiah
- The structure of the Book
  - Isaiah's book is carefully structured, and that structure helps us understand it
  - The first five chapters provide something of an overview for the entire book)
    - Isaiah waits until chapter 6 to give his personal testimony to how he was called to be a prophet
  - Chapter one is itself a mini summary of the book and sets up the rest of the first five

[Is. 1:2](#) Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth;  
For the LORD speaks,  
" Sons I have reared and brought up,  
But they have revolted against Me.

[Is. 1:3](#) "An ox knows its owner,  
And a donkey its master's manger,  
*But* Israel does not know,  
My people do not understand."

- Isaiah's book begins with a call to heavens and earth to hear the Lord speaking to Israel
  - Israel here means the Southern Kingdom
    - Isaiah uses the term Israel because Judah is the true remaining remnant of Israel by this point
    - Ruled by the Davidic kings, still living in Jerusalem
  - The scene opens as if in a room in the gate of the city
    - A place where court was held
    - And God calls these two witnesses to put up a seat and hear the case against Israel
- God is the prosecutor

- The witnesses are to judge
  - What is the crime?
    - Israel's violation of the covenant they entered at Mt. Horeb with Moses
- When that covenant was inaugurated, God gave stipulations for their obedience, including blessings that would come from obedience and consequences for disobedience
  - In Deut, Moses restated the Law to Israel leading to a covenant declaration
  - Listen to how that declaration began in Deut 4

[Deut. 4:10](#) "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

[Deut. 4:11](#) "You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the *very* heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

[Deut. 4:12](#) "Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form — only a voice.

[Deut. 4:13](#) "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

[Deut. 4:14](#) "The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it.

- Then later

[Deut. 4:23](#) "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you.

[Deut. 4:24](#) "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

[Deut. 4:25](#) ¶ "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God *so as* to provoke Him to anger,

[Deut. 4:26](#) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

[Deut. 4:27](#) "The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you.

[Deut. 4:28](#) " There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

[Deut. 4:29](#) " But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

[Deut. 4:30](#) "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

- Later at the point Moses concluded the giving of the covenant, He spoke these words

[Deut. 31:28](#) "Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them.

[Deut. 31:29](#) "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

- Of course, by the time of Isaiah, Israel has become two nations, and both have been in violation of the covenant for centuries, to varying degrees
  - So Isaiah begins his vision explaining that the time of the judgment has begun with the two witnesses who were there in the beginning
  - V. 2 continues, sons I have reared but they revolted
    - God reared up, He established Israel, but rather than rely on God, they revolted against His authority
- And then Isaiah turns to one of his favorite literary techniques – sarcasm
  - Though an ox or even a lowly donkey know its master and its place of rest – animals that were considered dumb farm animals
    - The people of Israel don't even have that much understanding
    - If we were to rewrite this verse today, I would change the kind of animal & long-time students know exactly what kind of animal would be used instead....poodle

[Is. 1:4](#) ¶ Alas, sinful nation,  
 People weighed down with iniquity,  
 Offspring of evildoers,  
 Sons who act corruptly!  
 They have abandoned the LORD,  
 They have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
 They have turned away from Him.

[Is. 1:5](#) ¶ Where will you be stricken again,  
 As you continue in *your* rebellion?  
 The whole head is sick  
 And the whole heart is faint.

[Is. 1:6](#) From the sole of the foot even to the head  
 There is nothing sound in it,  
*Only* bruises, welts and raw wounds,  
 Not pressed out or bandaged,  
 Nor softened with oil.

- Here are the details of the offenses of Israel (7)
  - Verse 4 opens the indictment
    - He begins with hoy, or woe
    - Sinful nation – goy – no better than Gentiles
    - And weighed down by their evil deeds
    - They are the children of evil rather than of God
    - Etc.
  - We're talking about the persistent pattern of Israel making idols for themselves, worshipping the pagan gods around them, practicing all kinds of abominations
    - Look at Manasseh...



[2Kings 21:1](#) ¶ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah.

[2Kings 21:2](#) He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

[2Kings 21:3](#) For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

[2Kings 21:4](#) He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name."

[2Kings 21:5](#) For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

[2Kings 21:6](#) He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking *Him to anger*.

- Then God asks in verse 5 rhetorically, where do you go from here?
  - How much worse do you want it to get?
  - He uses an analogy of a sick body to describe the nation's condition due to the consequences of her disobedience
    - From the sole to the head
    - The whole body bloody and wounded without bandage
    - Raw, exposed

[Is. 1:7](#) ¶ Your land is desolate,  
Your cities are burned with fire,  
Your fields — strangers are devouring them in your presence;  
It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.

[Is. 1:8](#) The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard,  
Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

[Is. 1:9](#) Unless the LORD of hosts  
Had left us a few survivors,  
We would be like Sodom,  
We would be like Gomorrah.

- As a result of their collective disobedience, the nation was already suffering under God's judgment
  - The land was suffering from war
    - The rising power of Assyria was already making its presence felt in both Israel and Judah

- The Assyrian King Sennacherib had already attacked forty six cities in Judah and carried a few hundred Jews captive
  - Verses 7 & 8 refer to these trials that came upon Judah
    - God is saying things have already been bad
    - Cities burned, fields unplanted, controlled by enemies
    - How much worse do you want it to get?
  - The nation had successfully repented those earlier hits, but Isaiah says it was only by God's hand that a remnant was spared
- The brief mention of survivors in verse 9 (sarid =remnant), raises a concept we will explore at length in Isaiah – it's one of his major themes
  - In describing Israel, the OT is always referring to the entity, not individual people within the whole
    - Israel was called as a people and nation to be holy
    - It must act together as a nation in that way or it failed to keep the covenant
      - It was not a covenant with certain people, but with the nation as a whole
  - When He entered into the covenant, God spoke these words

[Deut. 29:10](#) ¶ "You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, *even* all the men of Israel, [Deut. 29:11](#) your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, [Deut. 29:12](#) that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, [Deut. 29:13](#) in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [Deut. 29:14](#) ¶ "Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, [Deut. 29:15](#) but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today

- The Old Covenant was with the nation of Israel, including those who came later

- Israel is like the water in Canyon Lake
  - On any given day, it contains certain molecules of water
  - Next year, a different set of molecule are there, but it's still Canyon Lake
- This concept of a covenant made with an entity gives rise to a couple of additional concepts, including the concept of a remnant
  - First, if perfect universal obedience is the requirement for Israel under the covenant, how could Israel have ever expected to meet its terms
    - How could even just one person?
      - They couldn't
  - Paul says in Gal 3

[Gal. 3:17](#) What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

[Gal. 3:18](#) For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

[Gal. 3:19](#) ¶ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

[Gal. 3:20](#) Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.

[Gal. 3:21](#) Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

[Gal. 3:22](#) But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

[Gal. 3:23](#) ¶ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

[Gal. 3:24](#) Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

- On an individual level, the Law saved no one
  - Nevertheless, the nation as a whole was called to obey it
  - The Old Covenant bound Israel, and God will hold them to it's terms, but it's purpose wasn't to produce righteousness
    - It was to reveal the unrighteousness of men

- And ultimately drive men to faith in a redeemer
- As Paul says in Rom

[Rom. 4:13](#) ¶ For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

[Rom. 4:14](#) For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

[Rom. 4:15](#) for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

- Secondly, the fact that the OT speaks to a nation under the terms of the OT gives rise to the concept of a remnant, a group within the larger entity that does obey
  - A faithful group that knows the Lord truly and follows Him in faith
    - Scriptures says there is always a remnant
  - God provide special mercy and protection for them, but yet they still find themselves caught up in many of the judgments that come upon the nation
    - Caleb and Joshua wandered for 40 years, Daniel led into captivity, Elijah suffered in the droughts,
- We call those that honored God's word and obeyed Him the remnant
  - Isaiah talks frequently about God preserving a remnant even in the midst of an apostate nation
  - Verse 9 alludes to God's preserving of a remnant
  - And Isaiah will give significant attention to how Israel as a nation will be forced to meet its obligations under the Old Covenant
- In contrast to the remnant, we have those in Israel who rebel
  - They either give no attention to the Old Covenant
  - Or their attention was the wrong kind
    - They sought to make the covenant a means to righteousness, seeking to make themselves righteous through performance of Law

- What do you think this last group might say to the accusations God is leveling against the nation in this indictment?

[Is. 1:10](#) ¶ Hear the word of the LORD,  
 You rulers of Sodom;  
 Give ear to the instruction of our God,  
 You people of Gomorrah.

[Is. 1:11](#) “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?”  
 Says the LORD.

“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
 And the fat of fed cattle;  
 And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.

[Is. 1:12](#) “When you come to appear before Me,  
 Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?”

[Is. 1:13](#) “Bring your worthless offerings no longer,  
 Incense is an abomination to Me.  
 New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies —  
 I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

[Is. 1:14](#) “I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts,  
 They have become a burden to Me;  
 I am weary of bearing *them*.

[Is. 1:15](#) “So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*,  
 I will hide My eyes from you;  
 Yes, even though you multiply prayers,  
 I will not listen.  
 Your hands are covered with blood.

- God sets aside their pious displays of worship that were not done in faith
  - They did two things
    - First, they multiplied sacrifices – large in quantity
    - Secondly, they sacrificed fat of fed cattle
      - In other words, the quality of their sacrifices were top notch too
  - This is the expected response of men engaged in a pious, self-serving, empty, ritualistic performance designed to impress themselves and others
    - This is what all men with evil hearts do
    - They fake it,
      - What they lack in truth they make up for in style

- Look at the array of activity
  - Sacrifices, coming before God regularly
    - Which He calls trampling his courts
  - Offerings, incense, festivals, Sabbaths, and their assemblies
    - God says He cannot endure the combination of their persistent sin combined with the superficial act of assembling to worship Him
  - In verse 14, one of the most haunting verses in Scripture
    - I hate your celebrations in my honor
- But from God's perspective, their sacrifices are cheap and worthless
  - Because they are hypocrisy
    - I am tired of it all, I grow weary of bearing them
    - God was paying attention, but His patience was wearing thin
  - So when they approach Him in prayer, He hides His eyes
    - Even multiplying their prayers, He will not listen
    - The hands you hold up in worship are covered in blood
- Now, Isaiah introduces a new theme, which we will only just introduce tonight
  - Forgiveness and redemption

[Is. 1:16](#) ¶ " Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.  
Cease to do evil,

[Is. 1:17](#) Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Reprove the ruthless,  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.

- In contrast to pious hypocrisy, God calls the nation to true worship
  - Look at the order

- First, wash themselves, become clean
  - Then cease doing evil
  - Then learn to do good
  - Then seek justice
    - Which consists of reprovng the ruthless
    - Defending the orphan
    - Pleading for the widow
- Do widows and orphans sound familiar?

[James 1:27](#) Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit **orphans** and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- These behaviors are the logical outworking of the prior steps
  - James was alluding to the entire chain in his letter