

Isaiah - Introduction

Isaiah 1:1

Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Who was Isaiah?

We know very little about Isaiah the individual apart from what we read in this opening verse.

We see he is the son of Amoz, which probably means Amoz was a person of note.

There was probably a royal connection as Isaiah seemed to have open access to the King. See 2 Kings 20 for one example.

His Name -

“Yahweh is Salvation”

When did he minister?

See Isaiah 6:1

This chapter is the commission of Isaiah

When did Uzziah die? 740 BC

Some have estimated his ministry as far as 680 BC into the reign of Manasseh.

His Martyrdom

Tradition informs us that he was sawn asunder by Manasseh.

Speaking of the martyrs in the OT we read -

Heb 11:37 They were stoned, **they were sawn asunder**, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Josephus writes of Manasseh -

For by setting out from a contempt of God, he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews. Nor would he spare the Prophets: for he every day slew some of them: till Jerusalem was overflowed with blood.

Antiquities of the Jews 10.3.1

Barnes notes that -

The testimony of the Jews on this subject is uniform

ie - There is no disagreement among the Jewish writers.

Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, speaking of Isaiah, says,

'whom ye sawed asunder with a wooden saw.'

2Ki 21:16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Doubtless, Isaiah as the chief Prophet in decrying the sins of the nation would have been a primary target of Manasseh.

Context and Background of His Ministry

Tiglath Pileser - King of Assyria - 745-727 BC

See 2 Kings 15:19 and 29

Pul just seems to be another name for him.

Fall of Israel - Northern Kingdom - 722 BC

Assyrian Kings that are important in the Context of Isaiah.

Tiglath-Pileser III	745–727 BC	"son of Ashur-nirari (V)"
Shalmaneser V	727–722 BC	"son of Tiglath-Pileser (III)"
End of the document known as <i>Assyrian King List</i> ; the following kings reigned after the list had been composed.		
Sargon II	722–705 BC	Sargon II - A younger brother to Shalmaneser V
Sennacherib	705–681 BC	Isaiah 36-37 2 Chronicles 32 2 Kings 18-19

Kings of Judah during His Ministry

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Tradition (early church history) includes Manasseh

Uzziah - 2 Chronicles 26

Jotham - 2 Chronicles 27

Ahaz - 2 Chronicles 28

Hezekiah - 2 Chronicles 29-32

Manasseh - 2 Chronicles 33

(Eight chapters in total)

Read these chapters for a sense of the time and climate in which Isaiah ministered.

Chronicles, unlike Kings, concentrates on the Kings of Judah.

Uzziah - 2 Chronicles 26

Reign, 792-740 BC

A Good King - Mighty in Battle - Defeated the Enemies

Key verse -

2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

Jotham - 2 Chronicles 27

Reigned for 16 years (Co - Regency because of Fathers leprosy)

Key verse -

2Ch 27:6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

Ahaz - 2 Chronicles 28

Reigned 16 years

A Wicked, Idolatrous King who by his grievous sins, brought much grief to the nation.

Numerous invasions upon Judah by various nations during his reign.

Key Verse -

2Ch 28:19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

Hezekiah - 2 Chronicles 29-32

Reign - 29 years Hezekiah was a Great Reformer King.

2Ch 29:3 He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

He fully restored all the Temple sacrifice, worship, priesthood etc.

He also destroyed the Idols of the land.

As death approached he prayed for healing and was heard. 15 years was added to his life.

But instead of this being a blessing it was a curse.

He brought in the Babylonians and showed to them all the precious treasures of his house.

Isaiah proclaimed God's anger to him.

Also - Manasseh was born during this 15 year period.

Manasseh - 2 Chronicles 33

Became King at 12 and reigned for 55 years.

A very Evil and Wicked King -

2Ch 33:3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

2Ch 33:4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

2Ch 33:5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

2Ch 33:6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

2Ch 33:7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

But then a great change -

2Ch 33:10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

2Ch 33:11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

2Ch 33:12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

2Ch 33:13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

Contemporaries of Isaiah

See print out of Kings

Other Prophets at the same time as Isaiah

The only prophet whose ministry ran in tandem with Isaiah was Micah.

Mic 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Jonah, Hosea and Amos were just before.

Nahum - Just after

How Many Isaiah's?

Some have suggested that there were 2 or even three authors of Isaiah.

The main argument is the internal content of the book.

They say that 1-39 and 40-66 cannot be by the same author because the content, style etc is so different.

That is like saying that the God of the Old and New Testaments cannot be the same God.

Outline of Isaiah

The Two Major parts of Isaiah are

1-39

40-66

Some have suggested that this corresponds to the OT and NT

1-39

Warnings of impending judgment

The Holiness of God emphasised

Promises of gospel deliverance

40-66

Gospel blessings realised

Not written as prophecy but as achieved and realised

Isaiah is called the Evangelical Prophet.

Let us conclude with such a Gospel verse -

Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

The Lord Bless His Word to our souls.

Amen.