

ISAIAH

1. Author.

- a. Isaiah (יִשְׁעַיָּהוּ) means “Yahweh saves.” His name derives from the same root word as Jesus’ name (יֵשׁוּעַת).
- b. We don’t know much about Isaiah’s personal life. This is by design.
 - (1) For Isaiah, it was never about himself. It’s about God, Israel, the nations, and the Messiah. Except for Is 1, 6-8, and 37-39, he leaves himself out of it. He doesn’t mention himself at all in Is 40-66.
- c. Here’s what we do know:
 - (1) Isaiah prophesied in Judah for sixty years, from about 739 to 681 bc. Just remember “700 bc.”
 - (a) **Is 1:1** 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.
 - (b) Uzziah ruled from 790-39 bc.
 - (c) Jotham ruled from 750-31 bc.
 - (d) Ahaz ruled from 735-15 bc.
 - (e) Hezekiah ruled from 730-686 bc.
 - (f) Manasseh ruled from 697-42 bc.
 - (2) He was from Jerusalem and probably from a distinguished family.
 - (3) He had a wife and at least two sons.
 - (a) **Is 7:3** 3 And Yahweh said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer’s Field.
 - (b) **Is 8:3** 3 And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz....
 - (4) He was well-educated, as evidenced by his style and vocabulary.
 - (5) He maintained close contact with Judah’s kings.
 - (6) His contemporary prophets were Hosea (755-14 bc) and Micah (733-01 bc). Hosea was the last prophet to Israel. Micah was the country prophet of Judah, while Isaiah was the city prophet of Judah.
 - (a) **Hos 1:1** 1 The word of Yahweh that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.
 - (b) **Mic 1:1** 1 The word of Yahweh that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
 - (7) God instructed Isaiah to write down his prophecies for future generations.
 - (a) **Is 30:8** 8 And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.
 - (8) Jewish tradition says Isaiah was sawn in two by Hezekiah’s son Manasseh (697-42 bc).
 - (a) **He 11:37** 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.

2. Structure.

- a. *Isaiah* is structured almost as a miniature Bible.
 - (1) The first 39 chapters (like the 39 OT books) stress God's holiness, justice, and righteousness.
 - (2) The last 27 chapters (like the 27 NT books) stress God's compassion, glory, and grace.
- b. *Isaiah* is a carefully constructed anthology. It tends to be thematic, not chronological.
 - (1) Isaiah is "an anthology of many different materials coming from a variety of settings in the prophet's life, but that they have been assembled together according to an overall literary and theological grid, either by the prophet himself or by his immediate followers."¹
- c. Is 1-37 is a written deposit from a spoken ministry. Is 40-55 and 56-66 are books with a plan and structure.²

3. Authenticity.

- a. Argument. Critics claim a second Isaiah wrote chapters 40-55, and possibly a third Isaiah wrote chapters 56-66. This is because:
 - (1) Is 1-39 has an Assyrian background, but Is 40-66 has a Babylonian background.
 - (2) The style of Is 1-39 differs from the style of Is 40-66.
 - (3) The theological focus of Is 1-39 differs from the focus of Is 40-66.
 - (4) Isaiah could not have predicted the Babylonian captivity and Israel's return under Cyrus 150 years in advance (Is 44:28; 45:1). Predictive prophecy is impossible.
- b. Arguments in favor of *Isaiah's* authenticity, historicity, and unity are:
 - (1) Only Isaiah is named in the book (Is 1:1-3; 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2; 37:2, 6, 21; 38:1, 4, 21; 39:3, 5, 8).
 - (a) If another prophet wrote Is 40-66, why wouldn't he be named in accordance with usual Jewish practice?
 - (2) Every edition of *Isaiah* ever found presents Is 1-66 as one physical unit.³
 - (a) "That the text form of that scroll as well as the fragmentary 1QIs^b is essentially identical to that of the normative MT of A.D. 950 indicates that as early as 100 B.C. the book was considered of such authority that its final form was already well established."⁴
 - (b) *Isaiah's* textual integrity between 125 bc and 950 ad is absolutely incredible.
 - (3) Difference in language, style, and theology between chs. 1-39 and 40-66 are overstated.
 - (a) *Isaiah* is an anthology. Is 1-39 reflects Isaiah's oral ministry; Is 40-66 reflects his written ministry.

¹ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 44-45.

² Alec J. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 16.

³ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:16.

⁴ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:29.

- (b) There is no theological contradiction between Messiah as King (Is 1-39), Servant (Is 40-55), and Conquerer (Is 56-66).
- (4) *Isaiah* certainly was written before Jesus' birth and does include predictive prophecy.
 - (a) The earliest known manuscript of *Isaiah* dates to 125-100 bc. It was found at Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea in 1947 and is referred to as 1QIsa.⁵
 - (b) All prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' life were predictive and not after-the-fact.
 - (c) That details of Jesus' life were predicted proves details of Cyrus' life could also be predicted.
 - (d) Predictive prophecy is a basic assertion/claim of *Isaiah*.
 - 1) **Is 42:9** Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare. Before they spring forth I tell you of them.
- (5) Jesus, the apostles, and many others always viewed *Isaiah* as written by Isaiah.
 - (a) Jn 12:37-41 quotes from Is 6:9-10 and Is 53:1 and attributes it all to Isaiah.
 - (b) In Ro 9:27 and 10:16-21, Paul quotes from Is 10, 53, and 65, giving credit to Isaiah.
 - (c) The same is true of Mt 3:3; 12:17-21; Lk 3:4-6; and Ac 8:28.
 - (d) Ecclesiasticus, the Septuagint, and the Talmud viewed *Isaiah* as written by one author.
 - (e) The historic position of the Church is that *Isaiah* is a compositional unit.⁶
- c. Application.
 - (1) Don't be swayed by arguments against *Isaiah's* authenticity, reliability, and unity. All of *Isaiah* was written by the prophet Isaiah around 700 bc.

4. Historical Background.

- a. Understanding the political, social, and religious situation of Israel and the nations in Isaiah's time is crucial to interpreting *Isaiah*.⁷
- b. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
 - (1) Is 1.1, 6.1, 7.1, 14.28, 36.1
 - (2) 2 Ki 14:17-21:26
 - (3) 2 Ch 26-32
- c. Summary.
 - (1) After Solomon's death (931 bc), Israel split from Judah.
 - (2) Before that time, Israel and Judah primarily dealt with smaller rival nations: Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Aram Syria, Ammon, Moab, Arabia, and Edom. Sometimes Egypt became involved.
 - (3) Assyria dominated the Middle East from 744 to 612 bc.
 - (4) Israel was conquered and deported by Assyria in 722 bc, during Isaiah's lifetime.
 - (5) Of the kings of Judah in Isaiah's day, Uzziah (790-39 bc) and Jotham were good kings, Ahaz was a bad king (735-15 bc), Hezekiah (730-686 bc) was a great king, and Manasseh was a horrible king (697-42bc).
 - (6) Babylonia dominated the Middle East from 612 to 539 bc.

⁵ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, I:3.

⁶ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:20.

⁷ Smith, *NAC*, 1:25.

- (7) Judah was conquered and deported by Babylonia in 586 bc. This was the time of *Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel*.
- (8) Persia dominated the Middle East from 539 to 331 bc. This was the time of *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*.
- (9) Greece and Rome followed.

5. Theological Background.

a. Abrahamic Covenant (unconditional).

- (1) **Ge 12:1-3** 1 Now Yahweh said to Abram, Go from your country, your kindred, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

b. Mosaic Covenant (conditional).

- (1) At Sinai, Israel solemnly promised to do all the words Yahweh had spoken and to be obedient to the Book of the Covenant (Ex 24:1-8).
- (2) God promised extraordinary blessing to Israel if she would obey his voice. He would place her high above the nations (Dt 28:1-14).
- (3) If Israel didn't obey his voice, God would bring curses, confusion, frustration, and destruction upon Israel (Dt 28:15-20, 45).
- (4) In Isaiah, we see Israel has not fulfilled the promise she made in Ex 24. She has not obey the voice of Yahweh, and the curses are coming

c. Davidic Covenant (unconditional).

- (1) **2 Sa 7:11-16** 11 Moreover, Yahweh declares to you [David] that Yahweh will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. ... 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

d. New Covenant (unconditional).

- (1) **Dt 30:1-10** 1 When all these things come upon you [Israel], the blessing and the curse, which I [Moses] have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you, 2 and return to Yahweh your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 then Yahweh your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. 5 And Yahweh your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. 6 And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed (עָרַץ), so that you will love (אָהַב) Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. 7 And Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. 8 And you shall again obey the voice of Yahweh and keep all his

commandments that I command you today. 9 Yahweh your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground. For Yahweh will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, 10 when you obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- (2) **Is 59:20-21** 20 A Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, declares Yahweh. 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says Yahweh: My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your seed (יְרֵעָה), or out of the mouth of the seed of your seed (יְרֵעַ יְרֵעָה), says Yahweh, from this time forth and forevermore.

6. Message.

- a. A King is coming who will rule in righteousness over a righteous remnant, but he cannot do so until he first becomes a Servant who provides righteousness for the remnant and a Conquerer who overthrows the enemies of the remnant.⁸
- b. “[P]roud, arrogant, sinful Israel is anything but the servant of God. Nevertheless, Israel is declared as the means through whom God’s light and blessing will come to the world. In the words of chs. 40-48, Israel is to be his witness. But this poses a nearly unanswerable question: How can *this* Israel become *that* Israel? The rest of the book functions as an answer to that question. In short, the answer is God, God who has the power (chs. 7-39) and the grace (chs. 40-66) to make the impossible possible.”⁹
- c. **Ac 15:16-17** 16 After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the nations who are called by my name. [This is James speaking at the Jerusalem council].

7. Scope.

- a. The breadth and scope of *Isaiah* is truly incredible.
 - (1) “Of all the books in the OT, Isaiah is perhaps the richest. Its literary grandeur is unequalled. Its scope is unparalleled. The breadth of its view of God is unmatched. ... Thus it is no wonder that Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the NT, and along with Psalms and Deuteronomy, one of the most frequently cited of all OT books. Study of it is an opportunity for unending inspiration and challenge.”¹⁰
- b. For developing a biblical worldview, few biblical books compare with *Isaiah*.
 - (1) *Isaiah* is close to being in the top tier of biblical books, along with *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Psalms*, *John*, *Romans*, and *Revelation*.
- c. God has a whole, comprehensive plan and purpose for human experience.

⁸ See A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 16.

⁹ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 54.

¹⁰ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:3.

- (1) “God, unlike the idols, had plans and purposes for human experience ([Is] 14:24-27; 19:12; 23:8-9; 25:1; 37:26; 45:9-11, 18; 46:10-11). Moreover, these plans were part of a comprehensive whole. Isaiah expected that history would find its climax as the nations of the world flowed to a redeemed and glorified Zion, there to share in the divine character itself (2:-5; 11:9; 25:7-8; 60:1-22).”¹¹
- (2) **Ge 12:3** 3 In you [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

8. Themes.

a. God’s holiness.

- (1) Like Isaiah, we must develop a continual, deep awareness of the holiness of God.
 - (a) **Is 6:3** 3 Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!
 - (b) The adjective קדוֹשׁ (“holy”) is used of God more in *Isaiah* than in the rest of the OT combined.
 - (c) God’s title “the Holy One of Israel” occurs 45 times in *Isaiah* and only 7 times elsewhere in the entire Bible.¹²
 - (d) “[Isaiah’s] whole pattern of thought has been affected by the tremendous contrast between the greatness of God and the corruption of humanity. But caught up with this contrast is the amazing paradox that if humanity will lay aside its pretensions to deity, the true God will raise us to fellowship with himself (57:15).”¹³
 - 1) **Is 57:15** 15 Thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.
 - (e) For Isaiah, no one other than God has the right to be called holy.¹⁴
 - (f) “Because God alone is great, and because he alone is holy, the worship of other gods is sheerest folly. Above everything else, it is stupid. Nowhere else in Scripture is the stupidity of idolatry subjected to such exquisite sarcasm as in the book of Isaiah.”¹⁵
 - 1) **Ro 1:22-23** 22 Claiming to be wise, [men] became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, animals and creeping things.

b. Israel and the Nations.

- (1) *Isaiah* shows Israel is and always will be at the center of human history.
- (2) *Isaiah* is crucial in understanding the relationship between Israel and the nations.

¹¹ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:35.

¹² John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:19.

¹³ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:32.

¹⁴ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:32.

¹⁵ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:34.

- (a) **Ge 12:3** 3 I [Yahweh] will bless those who bless you [Abraham], and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
- (b) **Is 49:6-7** 6 It is too light a thing that you [Messiah] should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. 7 Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of Yahweh, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.
- (3) *Isaiah* clearly shows God interacts with Israel and the nations dispensationally.
 - (a) See *Dispensations*.
 - (4) Paul and others used *Isaiah* to explain Israel's temporary rejection of Messiah Jesus.
 - (a) **Ac 28:25-28** 25 And being in disagreement among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: 26 Go to this people and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them [a quotation of Is 6:9-10]. 28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen.
 - (b) **Ro 9:27-29** 27 Isaiah [Isaiah 10:22-23] cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, 28 for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay. 29 And as Isaiah predicted [in Is 1:9], If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.
 - (c) Isaiah gave the warning before Jerusalem's first destruction. Paul gave the warning before Jerusalem's second destruction.
 - 1) Neither of them lived to see the destructions, but both warnings came true.
 - (5) Paul also used *Isaiah* to prove the future salvation of the remnant of Israel.
 - (a) **Ro 11:26-27** 26 In this way all [believing] Israel will be saved. As it is written [in Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9], The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will banish ungodliness from Jacob, 27 and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.
 - (6) Finally, *Isaiah* shows it is always foolish for nations to fight against Israel.
 - (a) **Ge 12:3** 3 Him who dishonors you [Abraham and Israel] I will curse.
- c. Messiah.
 - (1) A Messianic King-Servant-Conquerer is coming who:
 - (a) Is endowed with the Holy Spirit
 - 1) **Is 11:1-4** 1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall produce fruit. 2 And the Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of

counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

- 2) **Is 42:1** 1 Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.
- 3) **Is 61:1-3** 1 The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed (מָשַׁח) me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, 2 to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit, that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he may be glorified.

(b) Is righteous.

- 1) **Is 9:7** 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.
- 2) **Is 11:4** 4 ...But with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- 3) **Is 53:11** 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the Righteous one, my Servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.
- 4) **Is 59:16** 16 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede. Then his own arm brought him salvation (יִשְׁעוֹ), and his righteousness upheld him.
- 5) **Is 63:1** 1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.

(c) Is the Son of David.

- 1) **Is 9:7** 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.
- 2) **Is 11:1** 1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall produce fruit.
- 3) **Is 11:10** 10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

- 4) **Is 55:3** 3 Incline your ear and come to me. Hear, that your soul may live. And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
- (d) Will establish justice and peace on the earth.
 - 1) **Is 42:1-4** 1 Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his Torah.
- (e) Will bring back the remnant of Israel.
 - 1) **Is 49:6** 6 [Yahweh] says: It is too light a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel.
- (f) Will be a light for the nations.
 - 1) **Is 11:10** 10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.
 - 2) **Is 49:6** 6 [Yahweh] says: It is too light a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.
 - 3) **Is 66:19** 19 And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.
- (g) Will be, in some unexplainable way, both God and man.
 - 1) **Is 9:6** 6 For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 - 2) **Is 53:2** 2 For [the Servant] grew up before [Yahweh] like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.
 - 3) **Is 59:16** 16 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede. Then his own arm brought him salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), and his righteousness upheld him.
 - 4) **Is 63:1-5** 1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me. I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath. Their lifeblood spattered on my garments and stained all my apparel. 4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help. I was

appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.

d. Messianic Kingdom.

- (1) Is 4:2; 11:2-6, 10; 32:1-8; 49:7; 52:13, 15; 59:20-21; 60:1-3; 61:2-3

9. Significance.

a. The NT writers reference *Isaiah* more times than all the other prophets together (21 direct quotations and numerous allusions).¹⁶

- (1) Isaiah 53 alone is quoted or alluded to at least 85 times in the New Testament.
(2) *Isaiah* was especially important to Paul. Isaiah has been called the “Saint Paul of the Old Testament.”

b. Isaiah is mentioned by name 22 times in the NT, for more than any other prophet.

c. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles constantly pointed to the fulfilment of Isaiah.

- (1) John as the forerunner of Messiah.

(a) **Mt 3:3** 3 For this [John] is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.

(b) **Mk 1:2** 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way....

(c) **Lk 3:4** 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

(d) **Jn 1:23** 23 [John] said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

- (2) The Messiah arising in Galilee.

(a) **Mt 4:13-16** 13 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

- (3) The Messiah’s miracles of healing.

(a) **Mt 8:16-17** 16 That evening they brought to [Jesus] many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.

- (4) The Messiah’s gentleness and avoidance of conflict.

(a) **Mt 12:15-21** 15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 18 Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he

¹⁶ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:29.

will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. 21 And in his name the Gentiles will hope.

- (5) The inability of Israel to understand.
 - (a) **Mt 13:13-15** 13 This is why I [Jesus] speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.
 - (b) **Ac 28:25** 25 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet....
- (6) The hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders.
 - (a) **Mt 15:6-9** 6 So for the sake of your tradition you [Jewish leaders] have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 8 This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 9 In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.
 - (b) **Mk 7:6** 6 And [Jesus] said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me...
- (7) That Messiah would proclaim good news and set at liberty the oppressed.
 - (a) **Lk 4:17-21** 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to [Jesus]. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. 20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.
- (8) Israel's unbelief.
 - (a) **Jn 12:38** 38 ...So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
 - (b) **Jn 12:39** 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said....
 - (c) **Ro 10:16** 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?
- (9) The glory of Messiah.
 - (a) **Jn 12:41** 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.
- (10) The substitutionary death of Messiah.
 - (a) **Ac 8:32-35** 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is

silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom, I ask you, does the prophet [Isaiah] say this, about himself or about someone else? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

- (b) **1 Pe 1:10-12** 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets [including Isaiah] who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Messiah in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Messiah and the subsequent glories [Is 53]. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you....
- (11) Salvation only for the Jewish remnant.
 - (a) **Ro 9:27** 27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved....
 - (b) **Ro 9:29** 29 And as Isaiah predicted, If the Lord of hosts had not left us seed, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.
- (12) The Gentiles' positive volition to Messiah.
 - (a) **Ro 10:20** 20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.
 - (b) **Ro 15:12** 12 And again Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles. In him will the Gentiles hope.
- d. *Isaiah* is to have as much influence on our faith and practice as it had on the apostles.
 - (1) If we want to understand our faith and what the apostles taught, we must understand *Isaiah*. The worldview of *Isaiah* must be our worldview today.

10. Tips for Reading *Isaiah*.

- a. Read *Isaiah* as a thematic, not chronological, anthology.
- b. Remember Is 1-37 is a written deposit from a spoken ministry. Is 40-55 and 56-66 are books with a plan and structure.¹⁷
- c. Enjoy *Isaiah*'s literary artistry. Look for (especially in Hebrew):
 - (1) Palindromes: sentences that begin and end with same word (e.g., Is 1:7, 18; 40:19; 57:6).
 - (2) Assonance: the resemblance of sound between syllables in nearby words arising from the rhyming of stressed vowels (e.g. *sonnet, porridge*), and also from the use of identical consonants with different vowels (e.g. *killed, cold, culled*)(e.g., Is 1:21; 40:31; 57:1).
 - (3) Alliteration: the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.
 - (4) Lists (e.g., eight imperatives in Is 1:17-18; four statements of overthrow in Is 41:11-12; five contrasts in Is 65:11-16).

¹⁷ Alec J. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 16.

- (5) Extended doublets: the same area of truth is covered twice over, from two angles of perspective (like Ge 1-2) (Is 7:1-9:7 with Is 9:8-11:16; and Is 42:18-43:21 with Is 43:22-23).¹⁸
- d. Use your imagination. Enjoy Isaiah's imagery and word pictures.
 - (1) Isaiah is called the "Shakespeare of the prophets" for a reason.
- e. Be ready for sudden changes in referent or time period.
 - (1) Keep asking two questions: "Who is Isaiah talking about?" "What time period is he talking about?"
- f. Look for contrasts.
 - (1) Again and again polar opposites are played off against each other.¹⁹
- g. Keep in mind the primary question *Isaiah* is answering: Given Israel's failure, how will the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants be fulfilled?
- h. Develop broad theological principles from the specific incidents in Isaiah.
 - (1) Establishing relevance to our own day "comes from (a) understanding the meaning of the prophet's message to his audience, (b) developing broad theological principles from these specific incidents and teachings, and (c) finding analogies between the Old Testament theological teaching and the modern world today."²⁰
- i. Be careful about making a one-to-one correlation between Israel and the Church, the West, or New Zealand. Focus on with general theological principles.

11. Application.

- a. See history from God's point of view.
- b. Understand God's plan for history centres on Israel and her Messiah.
- c. Put all your hope in Jesus, the Messianic King-Servant-Conquerer.
- d. Use *Isaiah* to share the gospel, just as the early church did.
 - (1) **Ac 8:27-35** 27 There was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, Go over and join this chariot. 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading? 31 And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else [inductive Bible study]? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

¹⁸ Alec J. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 24.

¹⁹ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:32.

²⁰ Gary V. Smith, *NAC*, 1:23.

- (2) **Ac 9:22** 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah [using Isaiah and other Old Testament books].
 - (3) **Ac 28:23** 23 From morning till evening [Paul] expounded to [the Jews of Rome], testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets [especially Isaiah].
 - (4) **1 Co 15:3-4** 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures [Isaiah 53], 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures [also Isaiah 53]....
- e. Stand boldly for God, as Isaiah did.
- (1) Isaiah was a huge influence in the lives of both Ahaz and Hezekiah.
 - (a) Judah survived Ahaz's apostasy because of Isaiah's ministry.
 - (b) Hezekiah stood his ground at a critical moment due to Isaiah (see Is 36-38).²¹
 - (2) Judah (conquered 586 bc) was given 136 more years of independence than Israel (conquered 722 bc) because of Isaiah and a handful of other heroes (Hezekiah, Josiah).
 - (3) Isaiah's ministry did not stop God's discipline of Judah, but it did extend Judah's time of grace.

²¹ John N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:28-29.

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