

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY

Beginning with Isaiah, and continuing through the Old Testament; there is a section of Scripture which is called the prophetic portion of the Bible. Although the predictive element bulks large in this section, the prophets were more than foretellers. Actually, they were men raised up of God in a decadent day when both priest and king were no longer worthy channels through which the expressions of God might flow.

These men not only spoke of events in the far off future but also spoke of local events in the immediate future. They had to speak in this manner in order to qualify for this office under God according to the Mosaic Code:

But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

If the local event did not transpire just as the prophet predicted, he was labeled a false prophet and so treated. You may be sure that the message of the false prophet is not in the library of inspired Scripture. The prophetic books are filled with events that are local and fulfilled. A sharp distinction needs to be drawn between this portion and that which is yet to be fulfilled.

One of the greatest evidences of the fact that these men were speaking the words of God is revealed in the hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled literally. Man cannot guess the future. Even the weather man has difficulty in prognosticating the weather for twenty-four hours in advance although he has the advantage of all sorts of scientific and mechanical devices to assist him. No modern weather man could have been an accepted prophet in Israel. The law of compound probability forbids man from consistently foretelling the future. Each uncertain element which he adds decreases his chance of accuracy fifty per cent. The example of hundreds of prophecies which have had literal fulfillment has a genuine appeal to the honest mind and sincere seeker after the truth. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the infallible proofs of plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture.

The predictive element is the peculiar and particular contribution of these men of God. This does not mean there was not this element before them or after them. The last book of the Bible closes the message of God for the future.

The prophets were extremely nationalistic. They rebuked sin in high places as well as low. They warned the nation. They pleaded with a proud people to humble themselves and return to God. Fire and tears were mingled in their message, which was not one of doom and gloom alone, for they saw the Day of the Lord and the glory to follow. All of them looked through the darkness to the dawn of a new day. In the night of sin they saw the light of a coming Saviour and Sovereign; they saw the Millennial Kingdom coming in all its fulness. Their message must be interpreted before an appreciation of the Kingdom in the New Testament can be attained: the correct perspective of the Kingdom must be gained through the eyes of the Old Testament prophets.

The prophets were not supermen—they were men of like passions as we are, but having spoken for God, their message is still the infallible and inspired Word of God:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (I Peter 1:10,11).

Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:15-21).

Sweet is the harp of prophecy;
Too sweet not to be wronged
By a mere mortal touch. (Cowper.)

II. ISAIAH—THE PROPHET

Most of the prophets moved in an orbit of obscurity and anonymity. They did not project their personalities into the prophecy they proclaimed. Jeremiah and Hosea are the exceptions to this, of course.

Isaiah gives us very little of a historical character concerning himself. There are a few scant references to his life and ministry. In Isaiah 1:1 he gives “**the days**” in which his lot was cast.

It was during the reigns of “**Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.**” These were not the darkest days in Judah internally. Uzziah and Hezekiah were enlightened rulers who sought to serve God. But the days were extremely dark because of the menace of the formidable kingdom of Assyria in the North. The northern kingdom of Israel was carried away into captivity during this period.

Isaiah 6 records the personal call and commission of Isaiah. This chapter should come first in the prophecy—logically, if not chronologically.

Isaiah 36-39 is the historical section which records the ministry of Isaiah during the crisis when the Assyrian host encompassed Jerusalem.

Beyond these few personal sections, Isaiah stands in the shadow as he points to another who is coming. It is stated by some that Isaiah belonged to the royal family of David. This cannot be positively affirmed. Likewise it has been stated that he is referred to in Hebrews 11:37 as the one “**sawn asunder.**”

This may or may not be true. The liberal critic has sawn him asunder in forging the fake fabric of the Deutero-Isaiah hypothesis. Some have gone so far as to fabricate a Trito-Isaiah. There is not a scrap of documentary evidence beyond the skepticism of the destructive critic. They have cut Isaiah up like a railroad restaurant pie. History presents only one Isaiah, not two or three.

This method of the destructive critic could be applied one thousand years hence to our day. They could just as easily prove that there were then three “Ike Eisenhowers.”

1st—General Eisenhower, the military leader of the victorious forces of World War II—European Theatre;

2nd—President Eisenhower of the United States, elected in 1952 and 1956;

3rd—Eisenhower, the invalid and victim of a heart attack and a serious operation for ileitis.

This, we know today, is utter nonsense, as there is only one man by the name of Eisenhower who fulfills all the requirements without any absurdity.

III. ISAIAH—THE PROPHECY

The prophecy of Isaiah is strikingly similar to the entire Bible which can be seen in the following comparison:

BIBLE	ISAIAH
66 Books	66 Chapters
39 Books—Old Testament	39 Chapters—LAW, Government of God
27 Books—New Testament	27 Chapters—GRACE, Salvation of God

Also, there are 66 direct quotations from Isaiah in the New Testament. Some have found 85 quotations and allusions to Isaiah in the New Testament.

20 of the 27 books of the New Testament quote from Isaiah. 12 books of the New Testament have direct quotations.

- ISAIAH is woven into the New Testament as a brightly colored thread is woven into a beautiful pattern.
 - ISAIAH is discernible and conspicuous in the New Testament.
 - ISAIAH is chiseled into the rock of the New Testament with the power tool of the Holy Spirit.
 - ISAIAH is often used to enforce and enlarge upon those passages that speak of Christ.
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- The New Testament presents the Lord Jesus Christ as its theme. By the same token Isaiah presents the Lord Jesus Christ as his theme.
 - Isaiah has been called the 5th Evangelist. The Book of Isaiah has been called the 5th Gospel.

Christ's Virgin birth, His character. His life, His death, His resurrection and His second coming are all presented in Isaiah in clearness and definiteness.

The Apostle Peter's word is especially applicable:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (I Peter 1:10,11).

Also compare Luke 4:16-22 with Isaiah 61:1-4.

The prophecy of Isaiah presents another important aspect of prophecy. This has to do with the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God. and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

One of the most solid proofs of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture is fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah contains many prophecies that have already been fulfilled since he wrote.

There were many false prophets in Israel, as the Scriptures reveal. Read the entire record in II Chronicles 18. Note especially II Chronicles 18:22—"Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee."

How were the people in that day to know the true from the false? The Mosaic system provided for this contingency:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

The prophet had to speak into a local situation and in respect to contemporary events of his day. If his prophecy failed to materialize, then he was declared a false prophet. If the matter came to pass, he was declared a true prophet. Isaiah prophesied into many local events. When Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian army. Isaiah made a very daring prophecy—

Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it (Isaiah 37:33).

Also see his prophecy concerning the sickness of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38.

There are other prophecies which were not fulfilled in his lifetime but today they stand fulfilled. See, for instance, his prophecies concerning the city of Babylon:

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged (Isaiah 13:19-22).

Further fulfillments relative to Babylon are recorded in Isaiah 47. Excavations at Babylon have revealed the accuracy of these prophecies. More than 50 miles of the walls of Babylon have been excavated. The culture of this great civilization is still impressive but lies in dust and debris today according to the written word of Isaiah. This is one of the many examples that could be given. Others will come before us in this study as we proceed through the book.

OUTLINE

I. JUDGMENT (Poetry). Chapters 1-35

Revelation of the Sovereign on the Throne (The Crown, chapter 6, The Government of God),

1. The Solemn Call to the Universe to Come into the Court Room to Hear God's **Charge** Against the Nation Israel. Chapter 1
2. A **Preview of the Future** for Judah and Jerusalem. Chapter 2
3. A **Present View** of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 3
4. **Another Preview** of the Future. Chapter 4
5. **Parable** of the Vineyard and Woes Predicted on Israel, Chapter 5
6. Isaiah's **Personal Call** and Commission as Prophet, Chapter 6
7. **Prediction** of Local and Far Events. Chapters 7-10 (Hope of Future in Coming Child)
8. The **Millennial Kingdom**, Chapters 11, 12
9. **Burdens** on Surrounding Nations (largely fulfilled), Chapters 13-23
 - (1) Burden of **Babylon**. Chapters 13, 14
 - (2) Burden of **Moab**, Chapters 15, 16
 - (3) Burden of **Damascus**, Chapter 17
 - (4) Burden of the Land Beyond the Rivers of **Ethiopia**, Chapter 18
 - (5) Burden of **Egypt**, Chapters 19, 20
 - (6) Burden of **Babylon, Edom, Arabia**, Chapter 21
 - (7) Burden of the **Valley of Vision**, Chapter 22
 - (8) Burden of **Tyre**, Chapter 23
10. The **Kingdom, Process and Program** by which the Throne is Established on Earth. Chapters 24-34
11. The **Kingdom, Mundane Blessings** of the Millennium, Chapter 35

II. HISTORIC INTERLUDE (Prose), Chapters 36-39

(This section is probably a prophetic picture of how God will deliver His people in the Great Tribulation, see II Kings 18, 19; II Chronicles 29-30).

1. King **Hezekiah and the Invasion** of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Chapter 36
2. King **Hezekiah's Prayer** and the Destruction of the Assyrian Hosts, Chapter 37
3. King **Hezekiah's Sickness**, Prayer, and Healing, Chapter 38
4. King **Hezekiah Plays the Fool**, Chapter 39

III. SALVATION (Poetry). Chapters 40-66

Revelation of the Saviour in the Place of Suffering (The Cross, chapter 53, The Grace of God). (There is a threefold division marked by the concluding thought in each division, "**There is no peace to the wicked**").

1. The **Comfort of the Lord** Which Comes Through the Servant, Chapters 40-48

(A Polemic Against Idolatry—Help and Hope Come Only Through the Servant)
2. The **Salvation of the Lord** Which Comes Through the Suffering Servant, Chapters 49-57

- (1) The Redeemer of the Whole Word, Who is God's **Servant**, Chapters 49-52:12
- (2) The Redemption Wrought by the Suffering Servant, Who is God's **Sheep** (Lamb), Chapters 52:13-53
- (3) The Results of the Redemption Wrought by the Redeemer, Who is God's Only **Saviour**, Chapters 54-57

3. The **Glory of the Lord** Which Comes Through the Suffering Servant, Chapters 58-66

- (1) Sin Hinders the Manifestation of the Glory of God, Chapters 58, 59
- (2) The Redeemer is Coming to Zion, Chapters 60-66

(Nothing Can Hinder God's Progress—He Will Judge Sin)

~ end of introduction ~

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