

Isaiah 1-39 (Part 1)

**One Story that
Leads to Jesus**



The Role of the Prophet

- Across the Hebrew Scriptures there are variety of words used that seem to be descriptive of the “prophetic”
 - Seer: one who has visions, pronounces oracles (Ezekiel)
 - Diviner: able to communicate with the Sacred (Samuel)
 - “Man of God” – Elijah and Elisha
 - *Nabi* – “one called to a task” usually translated as “prophet”
- Prophetic literature not always synonymous with the prophets, e.g. Baruch
- Themes of covenant, ethical norms, punishment, restoration
- Preaching mission, oracles, speaking to power & people

Prelude to Isaiah

- A timeline of the Kingdom(s)
 - ~ 1000 BC, the United Kingdom under King David
 - Continued under King Solomon until ~ 920 BC
 - Kingdom of Israel in the North (10 tribes)
 - Kingdom of Judah in the South (2 tribes + Jerusalem)
- King Uzziah of Judah died in 742 BC after leading Judah to a half century of prosperity and stability.
- *“He did what was right in the LORD’s sight, just as his father Amaziah had done. He was prepared to seek God as long as [the prophet] **Zechariah** lived, who taught him to fear God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.” (2 Chron 26:4-5).*

The Changing of Kings

- Isaiah commissioned by God the year Uzziah died (742)
 - Uzziah's son Jotham was upright before God (Chron 27)
 - In the North the power of Assyria cast its shadow on Israel
 - Jotham's son Ahaz ascended the throne in 732
- *“He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD... He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even made molten idols for the Baals. Moreover, he offered sacrifice in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, and immolated his children by fire in accordance with the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites. He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on hills, and under every green tree” (2 Chron 28:2-4)*

Isaiah's Commission

- The first five chapters of Isaiah are the seer's vision of the indictment against Israel and Judah as they, like the kings, turn away from the Lord.
- It is against this vision of God's pending punishment that the prophet is commissioned: *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' 'Here I am,' I said; 'send me!'"* (Isa 6:8)
- The enormous abyss between God's sovereign holiness and human sinfulness overwhelmed the prophet. Only the purifying coal of the seraphim could cleanse his lips and prepare him for acceptance of the call (Isa 6:4)

Isaiah's World

- Syro-Ephraimite War (735–732 BC) - political intrigue between Israel and Damascus on one side and the Assyrian Empire on the other - with Judah in between and King Ahaz on the throne.
- Accession of King Hezekiah (715 BC) - with the Assyrians at the gates of Jerusalem.
- Revolt of Ashdod (714–711 BC) - intrigue between Egypt and Assyria with Judah and near-by city-states caught in the middle.
- Death of Sargon of Assyria (705 BC), and the revolt against King Sennacherib of Assyria (705–701 BC) Jerusalem under siege with Hezekiah on the throne.

The Book of Isaiah (1-39)

- Calling the people back to a reliance on God's promises and away from vain attempts to find security in human plans and intrigues.
- But Isaiah does not offer any new laws, rites, or covenants.
- His vision led him to insist on the ethical behavior that was required of human beings who wished to live in the presence of such a holy God.
- As Isaiah tells King Ahaz: "*If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.*" (Isa 7:9, NSRV).
- Authorship

Introduction to the Prophets

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