

INTRODUCTION TO

ISAIAH



Author and Title

The opening words of the book explain that this is “the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz” (1:1). Unlike Jeremiah, who discloses aspects of his inner personal life (e.g., Jer. 20:7–12), Isaiah says little about himself. Isaiah 6 records his call to prophesy, openly revealing his innermost thoughts on that occasion. Chapters 7–8, 20, and 37–39 offer glimpses into his public ministry. The parallel accounts in 2 Kings 19–20 add a little. The NT bears witness to his prophetic foresight (John 12:37–41) and boldness (Rom. 10:20). Beyond this, the Bible’s sole interest is in Isaiah’s message, which is summed up in the meaning of his name: “Yahweh is salvation.”

Isaiah’s father was Amoz (1:1), but the Bible says nothing more of him. Jewish tradition claims that Amoz was a brother of Amaziah, king of Judah, putting Isaiah into the royal family. It is clear that Isaiah was a married man and a father (7:3; 8:3, 18). He appears to have been a resident of Jerusalem (7:3). Hebrews 11:37 (“they were sawn in two”; see note there) may allude to the tradition of Isaiah’s death under persecution by Manasseh, king of Judah (687–642 B.C.; cf. *Lives of the Prophets* 1.1; *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 5.1–14).

Isaiah’s record of the reign of King Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:22) is not to be identified with the biblical book of Isaiah.

The title presents the book as “the *vision* of Isaiah the son of Amoz” (1:1). Israel’s prophets were indeed seers (2 Kings 6:15–17; 17:13; Isa. 29:10; 30:10). Isaiah himself “saw the Lord” (6:1), but his visionary insights were made shareable by being put into a written message: “The *word* that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw” (2:1). Isaiah’s book is a vision in that it reveals, through symbols and reasoned thought, a God-centered way of seeing and living. It offers everyone the true alternative to the false appearances of this world.

Date

Isaiah prophesied “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (1:1). His call to ministry came “in the year that King Uzziah died” (6:1), around 740 B.C., and he lived long enough to record the death of Sennacherib (37:38), datable to 681. A few of the oracles can be dated, as the notes below will show: e.g., chapter 7 comes from about 735 B.C.; chapters 36–38 come from the time of the Assyrian invasion, 701. Most of the material, however, can be dated only in very general terms because the book offers no such information.

Some scholars theorize that more than one author was responsible for this book. These scholars spread the authorship of the book through multiple hands writing over the course of around 200 years. This theory proposes that, though chapters 1–39 are largely the work of Isaiah, chapters 40–66 are the work of an anonymous prophet living during the Babylonian exile, over a century after Isaiah. Many propose further that chapters 56–66 were composed by yet another, still later, anonymous prophet. This would yield First Isaiah (chs. 1–39), from the late eighth century B.C.; Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55), from the middle of the sixth century; and Third Isaiah (chs. 56–66), from sometime in the fifth century. There are three primary reasons offered for not attributing chapters 40–66 to Isaiah the son of Amoz: (1) Chapters 40–66 assume the exilic period as their background. (2) Chapters 40–66 have differences in style from chapters 1–39. (3) The detailed predictions in the latter section of the book would have been meaningful to the exilic and postexilic community of Judah, but (according to this view) would not have been relevant to the people of Isaiah’s own time.

These reasons for dividing the book suffer from severe shortcomings, and it is better to take the heading (1:1) as indicating that the entire book comes from Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

1. There is unified testimony from the ancient world for single authorship. (1) The NT refers to passages throughout the book as the work of Isaiah (see Matt. 3:3; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:14–15; 15:7–9; Mark 7:6–7; Luke 3:4–6; 4:17–19; John 1:23; 12:37–41; Acts 8:27–35; 28:25–27; Rom. 9:27–29; 10:16, 20–21; 15:12). The NT acknowledges no other author or authors. The testimony of Jesus in John 12:41 is especially instructive: “Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.” “These things,” which is plural, refers to the two previous quotations in John 12:38 (using Isa. 53:1, from the so-called “Second Isaiah”) and John 12:40 (using Isa. 6:10, from so-called “First Isaiah”), but Jesus refers to the one person, Isaiah, who both “saw his glory” and “spoke of him.” (2) The intertestamental book of *Sirach* (48:24–25) and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.5–6) attest Isaiah’s authorship of the whole book. (3) A Hebrew manuscript of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls bears witness to the seamless unity of the book as the work of Isaiah. (4) It is hard to imagine how prophets could have issued such oracles as those of Isaiah 40–66, which were of such importance in the history of Judah, and yet fade into obscurity. (5) Later OT authors seem to cite prophecies from chapters 40–66, which they could not have done if the book were broken up as described (e.g., see note on 60:7, used in Ezra 7:27).

2. There are many distinctive features of Isaiah’s style that run through all three parts. For example, Isaiah’s characteristic title for the Lord is “the Holy One of Israel,” which appears 25 times in the whole book (12 times in Isaiah 1–39; 11 times in chs. 40–55; and twice in chs. 56–66). It appears only six times outside of Isaiah: twice in Jeremiah, three times in the Psalms, and in 2 Kings 19:22 (cf. Isa. 37:33). The phrase “high and lifted up” is a feature of Isaiah, appearing in 2:12–14; 6:1; 52:13; 57:15 (i.e., in each of the three sections; see note on 6:1). The notes will show other aspects of coherent thought and expression in Isaiah. Any differences of style can be explained by the different topics of the chapters and by different stages in Isaiah’s life (e.g., Isaiah may have written chapters 40–66 after the Assyrian invasion of 701 B.C.).

3. The predictive material in chapters 40–66 is highly relevant both to the exilic audience and to Isaiah’s own day. Certainly it demonstrates the Lord’s rule over history; these chapters appeal to it for that purpose (e.g., 41:21–29), and Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.5–7) records a story of the impression the specific prediction of Cyrus (Isa. 44:28) made on the Persian monarch when he learned of it (a prediction made about 150 years in advance). The biblical worldview, which begins with the majestic Creator, can readily accept this. Further, chapters 40–66 often mention pagan religion, but specifically Babylonian material is rare (46:1); most address Canaanite idolatry, which Judah mixed in with their worship of Yahweh (e.g., 57:5; 66:3, 17; cf. 40:19; 41:7, 29; 42:17; 45:16–20; 46:6; 48:5; and the extended satire on idolatry, 44:9–20)—and this was no longer a problem in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem.

However, the primary significance of this predictive material resides in a wider context. The whole book portrays God’s plan for Judah as a story that is headed somewhere, namely, toward the coming of the final heir of David who will bring light to the Gentiles. Israel was created for this very purpose, and it will require that God’s people be purified of those members whose lives destroy that mission (see note on 1:24–28). This prospect of a glorious future enlists all believing readers to dedicate themselves to living faithfully and to embrace the dignity of playing a part in its development (cf. 2:5).

At the heart of Isaiah’s message is God’s purpose of grace for sinners. If that ultimate miracle is accepted—and one cannot be a Christian without accepting it—then a lesser miracle is no barrier. Indeed, the prophet making predictions of future events is not a problem; it is, as Isaiah intended it to be, encouraging evidence of God’s sovereign salvation intercepting a sinful world.

Theme

The central theme of the book is God himself, who does all things for his own sake (48:11). Isaiah defines everything else by its relation to God, whether it is rightly adjusted to him as the gloriously central figure in all of reality (45:22–25). God is the Holy One of Israel (1:4), the One who is high and lifted up but who also dwells down among the “contrite and lowly” (57:15), the Sovereign over the whole world (13:1–27:13) whose wrath is fierce (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4) but whose cleansing touch atones for sin (6:7), whose salvation flows in endless supply (12:3), whose gospel is “good news of happiness” (52:7), who is moving history toward the blessing of his people (43:3–7) and the exclusive worship due him (2:2–4). He is the only Savior (43:10–13), and the whole world will know it (49:26). To rest in the promises of this God is his people’s only strength (30:15); to delight themselves in his word is their refreshing feast (55:1–2); to serve his cause is their worthy devotion (ch. 62); but to rebel against him is endless death (66:24).

A microcosm of the book’s message appears in 1:2–2:5. The Lord announces his basic charge against the

people: they have received so much privilege from God and ought to be grateful children, but “they have despised the Holy One of Israel” (1:2–4). He describes the purpose of the various judgments they face, namely, to bring them to repentance, or at least to preserve a remnant who *will* repent (1:5–9). Judah is very diligent to observe the divinely appointed sacrifices, but the people’s hearts are far from God, as their unwillingness to protect their own weakest members exhibits (1:10–20). The Lord called his people to be the embodiment of faithfulness in this world, and yet they are now filled with rampant unfaithfulness at every level (personal, religious, and social); but God intends to purge Zion of its sinful members and set her up as a beacon of light for the whole world. In view of this glorious future, Isaiah’s contemporaries should commit themselves afresh to walking “in the light of the LORD” (1:21–2:5).

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Isaiah announces God’s surprising plan of grace and glory for his rebellious people and, indeed, for the world. God had promised Abraham that through his descendants the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). God had promised David that his throne would lead the world into salvation (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 89:19–37). But by Isaiah’s time, the descendants of Abraham and many members of the dynasty of David no longer trusted the promises of God, aligning themselves instead with the promises—and the fears—of this false world. Judah’s unbelief in God during the pivotal events of Isaiah’s lifetime redirected their future away from blessing and toward judgment. At this historic turning point, Judah moved from independence under God’s power to subservience under pagan powers.

What, then, of God’s ancient promises? Is the gracious purpose of God defeated by Judah’s sin? Isaiah answers that question. After the prefatory chapters 1–5, his answer unfolds in chapters 6–27, and the rest of the book develops the serious but hopeful message of these chapters. Isaiah’s answer is that, although God must purify his people through judgment, he has an overruling purpose of grace, beginning with Isaiah himself (ch. 6), spreading to Judah (7:1–9:7) and Israel (9:8–11:16), and resulting in endless joy (12:1–6). Even the nations of the world are taken into account (13:1–27:13). The purpose of Isaiah, then, is to declare the good news that God will glorify himself through the renewed and increased glory of his people, which will attract the nations. The book of Isaiah is a vision of hope for sinners through the coming Messiah, promising for the “ransomed” people of God a new world where sin and sorrow will be forever forgotten (35:10; 51:11).

Isaiah’s book envisions three historical settings (see chart): (1) chapters 1–39 are set against the background of Isaiah’s own times in the late eighth century B.C.; (2) chapters 40–55 assume the Jewish exiles in Babylon in the sixth century as their audience; and (3) chapters 56–66 take the returned exiles and subsequent generations of God’s people as their backdrop. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the chapters have relevance only to their assumed audiences: the long-range prophecies of chapters 40–66, as already indicated, challenge all the people of Judah in Isaiah’s time to accept their role in a story that is headed to a glorious future and to live faithfully in that light (cf. 2:5, on the heels of 2:1–4). Further, the entire book, as canonical Scripture, addresses all the people of God until Christ returns.

First, in his own times, Isaiah prophesied “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (1:1). Called by God “in the year that King Uzziah died” (6:1), his long ministry began in 740 B.C. The external threat of Isaiah’s day was the militant Assyrian Empire rising to power in the east. The question forced upon Judah by this threat was one of trust: in what will God’s people trust for salvation—in human strategies of self-rescue, or in prophetic promises of divine grace?

This question of what and whom to trust intensified on two occasions. The first occurred c. 735 B.C., during the reign of King Ahaz. Under pressure from Assyria, the northern kingdom of Israel formed a pact of

Simplified Overview of Isaiah

	Isaiah 1–39	Isaiah 40–55	Isaiah 56–66
Date and Setting	The eighth century B.C. (700s); the Assyrian threat	Prophecies about the sixth century B.C. (500s); the Babylonian exile	Prophecies about all times and occasions until the end
Audience	God’s rebellious people craving worldly security	God’s defeated people under worldly domination	All who hold fast to God’s covenant
Actions	God purifies a remnant of his apostate people through judgment	God consoles his discouraged people in exile	God prepares all of his true people for his promised salvation
Message	“In returning and rest you shall be saved; . . . But you were unwilling” (30:15)	“the glory of the LORD shall be revealed” (40:5)	“Keep justice, and do righteousness” (56:1)



The Near East at the Time of Isaiah
c. 740 B.C.

The prophecies of Isaiah are set against the backdrop of a rising Assyrian Empire. This resurgent ancient nation posed a great threat to Israel and Judah, and it would eventually engulf nearly the entire Near East from Ur to Ararat to Egypt.

mutual defense with Syria, and together these two kingdoms aimed to force Judah into alignment with them (ch. 7). But God could be trusted to stand by his commitment to defend the Davidic throne. Accordingly, Isaiah assured Ahaz of God's saving purpose. But Ahaz refused God, preferring the power of Assyria, and negotiated for pagan protection (2 Kings 16:5–9). Thus Ahaz surrendered the sovereignty of the Davidic throne to a nation hostile to the kingdom of God, and achieved nothing in return. The coalition arrayed against Judah failed—Syria fell in 732 B.C. and Israel in 722, as God had said they would (Isa. 7:16; 8:4).

The second crisis occurred in 701 B.C., during the reign of Hezekiah. This time Assyria was the threat. As before, the temptation was to negotiate an alliance of defense with human powers, in this case with Egypt (30:1–7; 31:1–3; 36:6). Judah chose the false refuge of human promises rather than to rest on the Lord's "sure foundation" (28:14–22). Assyria then set out to punish Judah for its pact with Egypt. Hezekiah tried to buy peace from the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:13–16), but they turned on him (Isa. 33:1). Under extreme pressure, Hezekiah finally put his trust in the Lord and found him to be powerfully faithful (chs. 36–37).

The eventual downfall of Judah was foreseen in Hezekiah's unguarded openness to Babylonian influence (ch. 39). Isaiah discerned in Hezekiah's enthusiasm for Babylon a future of captivity there for God's people.

Second, Isaiah was enabled by God to address the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. He announces a promise that God is coming with a world-changing display of his glory (40:5). To prepare for his coming, the exiles must return to the Promised Land (48:20). They must not be demoralized by the impressive but empty culture of idolatry in which they live (41:21–24), nor should they resent God's use of a pagan conqueror, Cyrus the Great, as their liberator from Babylon (44:24–28). They must look by faith for a greater liberator still to come, the messianic "servant of the Lord" (see note on 42:1–9). He will bring justice to the nations (42:1–4) and save his people from their ultimate captivity, the guilt of sin (52:13–53:12). Since the faith of God's people had already proven weak, God pledges that he alone will accomplish this, for his own glory (48:9–11).

Third, Isaiah addressed the returned exiles and subsequent generations of God's people with messages of challenge and hope, to keep their faith and obedience steady until God fulfills all his promises. Isaiah makes clear the spiritual and universal nature of God's true people (56:3–8; 66:18–23). He sees the final triumph of One who is "mighty to save" (63:1). His prophetic eye looks beyond the fraudulence of this world, all the way forward to the eternal finality of God's renewed people in a renewed cosmos (65:17; 66:22). "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28).

Key Themes

With God himself as the center of Isaiah's vision, multiple supportive themes are entailed:

1. God is offended by religious ritual, however impressive, if it conceals an empty heart and a careless life (1:10–17; 58:1–12; 66:1–4).
2. God's true people will become a multinational community of worship and peace forever (2:2–4; 19:19–25;

25:6–9; 56:3–8; 66:18–23), and the predominant culture of a new world (14:1–2; 41:8–16; 43:3–7; 45:14–17; 49:19–26; 60:1–22).

3. God opposes all manifestations of human pride (2:10–17; 10:33–34; 13:11; 16:6; 23:9; 28:1–4).

4. The foolish idols that man creates are destined for destruction (2:20–21; 19:1; 31:6–7; 44:9–20; 46:1–7).

5. Though God's judgment will reduce his people to a remnant, his final purpose is the joyful triumph of his grace (1:9; 6:1–12:6; 35:1–10; 40:1–2; 49:13–16; 51:3; 54:7–8; 55:12–13).

6. God is able to judge people by rendering them deaf and blind to his saving word (6:9–10; 28:11–13; 29:9–14; 42:18–25).

7. The only hope of the world is bound up in one man—the promised Davidic king (4:2; 7:14; 9:2–7; 11:1–10), the servant of the Lord (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1–3), and the lone victor over all evil (63:1–6).

8. God is actively using creation and history, and even the wrongs of man, for his own glory (10:5–19; 13:1–27:13; 36:1–39:8; 40:12–26; 44:24–45:13).

9. With a great and holy God ruling all things, man's duty is a repentant trust in him alone (7:9; 10:20; 12:2; 26:3–4; 28:12, 16; 30:15–18; 31:1; 32:17–18; 36:1–37:38; 40:31; 42:17; 50:10; 55:1–7; 57:13, 15; 66:2).

10. God's people, feeling abandoned by God (40:27; 49:14; 51:12–13), foolishly put their trust in worldly powers (7:1–8:22; 28:14–22; 30:1–17; 31:1–3; 39:1–8).

11. God will uphold his own cause with a world-transforming display of his glory (4:2–6; 11:10; 35:1–2; 40:3–5; 52:10; 59:19; 60:1–3; 66:18).

12. God uses predictive prophecy to prove that his hand is guiding human history (41:1–4, 21–29; 44:6–8; 44:24–45:13; 46:8–11; 48:3–11).

13. God's past faithfulness and the certainty of his final victory motivate his people toward prayer and practical obedience now (56:1–2; 62:1–64:12).

14. The wrath of God is to be feared above all else (5:25; 9:12, 17, 19, 21; 10:4–6; 13:9, 13; 30:27; 34:2; 59:18; 63:1–6; 66:15–16, 24).

History of Salvation Summary

Isaiah shares with the rest of the OT a high view of the mission of Israel. God called Abraham and his family to be the vehicle by which he would bring to the whole world the blessing of knowing the true God (Gen. 12:1–3). The great tragedy of Israel was their repeated faithlessness, which hid the light from the Gentiles. God will not be thwarted, however, and in order to bless the Gentiles he will purify his people (Isa. 1:24–28) and from them raise up the heir of David.

Though Isaiah denounces hypocrisy, greed, and idolatry as offenses against God, he also foresees the Savior of offenders, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God-with-us (7:14), the child destined to rule forever (9:6–7), the hope of the Davidic throne (11:1), the glory of the Lord (40:5), the suffering servant of the Lord (42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1–3), the bloodied victor over all evil (63:1–6), and more. Isaiah is mentioned by name in the NT over 20 times and is quoted there extensively, for the message he preached is the very gospel of Jesus and the apostles.

Isaiah's message makes an impact on every reader in one of two ways. Either this book will harden the reader's pride against God (6:9–10; 28:13; 29:11–12) or it will become to the contrite reader a feast of refreshment in God (55:1–3; 57:15; 66:2). Through Isaiah's vision the eyes of faith see their iniquity laid on Another (53:6), they see a new Jerusalem of eternal gladness (65:17–18), they see all humanity giving God the worship that is his due forever (66:22–23), and that prophetic vision keeps their hope alive. As with the rest of the OT, these things were written "that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). (For an explanation of the "History of Salvation," see the Overview of the Bible, pp. 23–26. See also History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ, pp. 2635–2662.)

Literary Features

The overall genre of the book is prophecy. Although biblical prophets primarily *tell forth* God's message in their contemporary situation, and less frequently *foretell* the future, the last third of Isaiah is an exception in being mainly predictive of the future. It is important to clarify two literary features of the foretelling: first, having been received in visions, it has many figurative elements; and second, its purpose is not simply

to tell the future but to express the author's sense of Israel's place in God's overarching redemptive plan for the world.

A book this large, and lacking a narrative line, must be viewed as an anthology or collection of individual compositions. It is often futile to look for a smooth flow from one unit to the next. The book swings back and forth between oracles of judgment and oracles of salvation. The general movement of the book is from an emphasis on evil and judgment to rapturous visions of a coming redemption, a movement from bad news to good news. But this is only a general pattern that should not lead readers to distort the smaller swings, between evil/judgment and redemption/restoration, which persist to the very last verses of the book.

The opening movement of the book is more of a warning against sin than a blueprint for the future. As Isaiah looks at his world, he *depicts* its evil, *denounces* that evil, and *predicts God's imminent judgment* against that evil. All three of these ingredients are typically couched in the form of the oracle of judgment, a divine indictment of present evil. Additionally, biblical prophets intermingle and end their books with visions of God's restored favor to his people; these visions are expressed in the form of the oracle of redemption (also called the oracle of salvation) and oracle of blessing.

The oracles of judgment need to be approached as examples of satire: they have an object of attack, a vehicle in which the attack is embodied, a stated or implied norm by which the criticism is conducted, and a prevailing tone of either ridicule or disgust. Because much of the book of Isaiah envisions things that either have not yet happened or do not literally happen (given the symbolic form in which they are portrayed), the genre of visionary writing is continuously operative in the book of Isaiah (the author *envisions* something that does not literally exist and/or that has not yet happened). A preponderance of the book is cast into the form of poetry, with the result that readers need to apply all that they know about staples of poetry, such as imagery, metaphor, simile, apostrophe, and hyperbole.

Many of the visions of redemption in the last third of Isaiah are lyric in form and effect. Apocalyptic writing appears prominently in chapters 24–27. Because the agents who interact with God are often nations rather than individuals, and because the forces of nature are also sometimes actors, the label “cosmic drama” is a helpful concept. Finally, in this book that encompasses such a diversity of material, there is even a full-fledged hero story involving King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah (chs. 36–39).

Outline

- I. Introduction: “Ah, Sinful Nation!” (1:1–5:30)
 - A. Judah's sins confronted (1:1–31)
 - B. Judah's hope, guilt, hope (2:1–4:6)
 1. Hope (2:1–5)
 2. Guilt (2:6–4:1)
 3. Hope (4:2–6)
 - C. Judah's sins condemned (5:1–30)
- II. God Redefines the Future of His People: “Your Guilt Is Taken Away” (6:1–12:6)
 - A. Grace—through judgment—for Isaiah (6:1–13)
 - B. Grace—through judgment—for Judah (7:1–9:7)
 - C. Grace—through judgment—for Israel (9:8–11:16)
 - D. The enjoyment of God's grace (12:1–6)
- III. God's Judgment and Grace for the World: “We Have a Strong City” (13:1–27:13)
 - A. First series of oracles: the here and now (13:1–20:6)
 1. Babylon (13:1–14:27)
 2. Philistia (14:28–32)
 3. Moab (15:1–16:14)
 4. The Syria-Israel alliance (17:1–18:7)
 5. Egypt (19:1–20:6)
 - B. Second series of oracles: the deeper truth (21:1–23:18)
 1. Babylon (21:1–10)
 2. Edom (21:11–12)
 3. Arabia (21:13–17)

- 4. Jerusalem (22:1–25)
- 5. Tyre (23:1–18)
- C. Third series of oracles: the final end (24:1–27:13)
 - 1. The wasted city (24:1–20)
 - 2. The Lord will punish (24:21–23)
 - 3. He will swallow up death forever (25:1–12)
 - 4. He will ordain peace (26:1–21)
 - 5. The whole world will be fruitful (27:1–13)
- IV. God’s Sovereign Word Spoken into the World: “Ah!” (28:1–35:10)
 - A. Six laments, with assurances (28:1–33:24)
 - 1. The proud crown of Ephraim (28:1–29)
 - 2. The city where David encamped (29:1–14)
 - 3. Those who turn things upside down (29:15–24)
 - 4. Stubborn children with their own plans (30:1–33)
 - 5. Those who go down to Egypt for help (31:1–32:20)
 - 6. The destroyer who has not been destroyed (33:1–24)
 - B. Two final outcomes: judgment or salvation (34:1–35:10)
- V. Historical Transition: “In Whom Do You Now Trust?” (36:1–39:8)
 - A. Practical trust in God vindicated (36:1–37:38)
 - B. Human inconstancy sent into exile (38:1–39:8)
- VI. Comfort for God’s Exiles: “The Glory of the Lord Shall Be Revealed” (40:1–55:13)
 - A. The God of glory: his coming, exclusivity, power (40:1–31)
 - B. The one true God moving history for his people (41:1–20)
 - C. False hopes, the Lord’s servant, a new song (41:21–42:17)
 - D. God reclaims his people for his glory (42:18–43:21)
 - E. God revives his people for his glory (43:22–44:23)
 - F. God predicts his use of Cyrus (44:24–45:25)
 - G. The gods and pride of Babylon doomed (46:1–47:15)
 - H. God will free his people from Babylon for his own sake (48:1–22)
 - I. The Lord’s servant displayed, his people assured (49:1–50:3)
 - J. The Lord’s servant taught, his people attentive (50:4–51:8)
 - K. Encouragements to a responsive faith (51:9–52:12)
 - L. The Lord’s servant: the exalted sin-bearer (52:13–53:12)
 - M. Compassion for God’s people, offered to all (54:1–55:13)
- VII. How to Prepare for the Coming Glory: “Hold Fast My Covenant” (56:1–66:24)
 - A. The true people of God redefined (56:1–8)
 - B. The false people of God exposed (56:9–57:13)
 - C. The true people of God invited (57:14–21)
 - D. The path to blessing: ritual vs. responsibility (58:1–59:13)
 - E. Present failure, eternal covenant, future glory (59:14–60:22)
 - F. The anointed Preacher renewing the world (61:1–62:12)
 - G. The coming Victor; his past faithfulness (63:1–14)
 - H. Praying for the power of God (63:15–64:12)
 - I. The eagerness of God for his people’s eternal joy (65:1–25)
 - J. True worship now and forever (66:1–24)

ISAIAH

1 The ^avision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem ^bin the days of ^cUzziah, ^dJotham, ^eAhaz, and ^fHezekiah, kings of Judah.

The Wickedness of Judah

- 2** ^gHear, O heavens, and give ear, O ^hearth;
for the LORD has spoken:
“Children¹ ⁱhave I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.
- 3** The ox ^jknows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s crib,
but Israel does ^knot know,
my people do not understand.”
- 4** Ah, sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
^koffspring of evildoers,
children who deal corruptly!
They have forsaken the LORD,
they have ^ldespised ^mthe Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly ⁿestranged.
- 5** Why will you still be ^ostruck down?
Why will you ^pcontinue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.

¹ Or Sons; also verse 4

Chapter 1

¹Ch. 6:1 ^bHos. 1:1; Mic. 1:1 ^c2 Kgs. 15:1, 7]; See 2 Chr. 26 ^dSee 2 Kgs. 15:32-38; 2 Chr. 27 ^ech. 7:1, 3, 10, 12; 14:28; See 2 Kgs. 16; 2 Chr. 28 ^fSee ch. 37:2-39:8; 2 Kgs. 18-20; 2 Chr. 29-32 ^gDeut. 32:1; [Deut. 4:26] ^hMic. 1:2, 6:2 [Deut. 32:6, 10, 15] ⁱ[Jer. 8:7] ^j[Matt. 3:7] ^kch. 5:24 ^lSee ch. 31:1 ^mEzek. 14:5 ⁿJer. 5:3; [ch. 9:13] ^och. 31:6

1:1-5:30 *Introduction: “Ah, Sinful Nation!”* The prophet rebukes the people of God in order for them to place themselves under the judgment of God’s word. Isaiah includes promises of miraculous grace beyond the remedial judgments. On 1:2-2:5 as a microcosm of the book’s message, see Introduction: Theme.

1:1-31 *Judah’s Sins Confronted.* Isaiah explains why God’s people Judah are in crisis. They do not comprehend that they have forsaken God, hollowed out their worship, and corrupted their society.

1:1 The superscription for the entire book. **vision.** A message from God

Kings of Judah in the Time of Isaiah

Isaiah prophesied “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (1:1).

Kings of Judah	Years of Reign
Uzziah (Azariah)	767–740 B.C.
Jotham	750–735
Ahaz	735–715
Hezekiah	715–686

(1 Sam. 3:1; Ezek. 7:26), given in symbolic form. **Isaiah the son of Amoz.** See Introduction: Author and Title. **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.** See Introduction: Date, and chart to the left.

1:2-9 Isaiah indicts Judah’s mindless revolt against God.

1:2 heavens . . . earth. Isaiah calls on the entire cosmos as a faithful witness to God’s word (Deut. 30:19; 31:28; Ps. 50:4). **Children . . . they.** These emphatic words accent the contrast between God’s grace and his people’s ingratitude. Thus Isaiah summarizes Israel’s history up to his time. Israel as a whole is God’s “son” (Ex. 4:22–23), and individual Israelites are also “sons” (see ESV footnote; Deut. 14:1); this privilege should have led to gratitude, but it did not. **rebelled.** See Isa. 66:24.

1:4 Ah is a cry of pain and indignation. **sinful.** Isaiah’s complex vocabulary uses a number of evocative Hebrew words for sin (translated here as **iniquity** and **corruptly**) that reveal to the people their true character. **the Holy One of Israel.** As described above (see Introduction: Date), this is Isaiah’s characteristic title for God, occurring 25 times in the book (and rarely anywhere else in the OT); it reflects a central theme in Isaiah’s thought. Perhaps it originated in the seraphic cry, “Holy, holy, holy” (6:3). When Isaiah saw God high and lifted up in infinite holiness, it defined his knowledge of God as the Holy One who is righteous (5:16), incomparable (40:25), redemptive (47:4), and lofty (57:15), and who has given himself to Israel. To despise the Holy One is to scorn, in practical ways, all that God is. **they are utterly estranged.** Their backwardness is beyond self-remedy.

6^qPs. 38:3 ^r[Jer. 8:22]
 7^sch. 5:5; 6:11, 12; Deut.
 28:51, 52
 8^tch. 10:32; 37:22; Zech.
 2:10; 9:9 ^uJob 27:18
 9^vLam. 3:22 ^wch. 10:21,
 22; Cited Rom. 9:29 ^xch.
 13:19; Gen. 19:24, 25
 10^yEzek. 16:46, 48, 49, 55;
 [ch. 3:9; Rev. 11:8]
^z[Deut. 32:32]
 11^aProv. 15:8; Jer. 6:20;
 Mal. 1:10; [ch. 66:3]; See
 1 Sam. 15:22
 12^bEx. 23:17; 34:23
 13^cNum. 28:11; 1 Chr.
 23:31 ^dEx. 12:16; Lev.
 23:36 ^e[Jer. 7:9, 10] ^fSee
 Joel 2:15-17
 14^g[See ver. 13 above]
 15^h1 Kgs. 8:22

- 6 ^qFrom the sole of the foot even to the head,
 there is no soundness in it,
 but bruises and sores
 and raw wounds;
 they are ^rnot pressed out or bound up
 or softened with oil.
- 7 ^sYour country lies desolate;
 your cities are burned with fire;
 in your very presence
 foreigners devour your land;
 it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.
- 8 And ^tthe daughter of Zion is left
 like a ^ubooth in a vineyard,
 like a lodge in a cucumber field,
 like a besieged city.
- 9 ^vIf the LORD of hosts
 had not left us ^wa few survivors,
 we should have been like ^xSodom,
 and become like ^yGomorrah.
- 10 Hear the word of the LORD,
 you rulers of ^zSodom!
 Give ear to the teaching^t of our God,
 you people of ^zGomorrah!
- 11 ^a“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
 says the LORD;
 I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
 and the fat of well-fed beasts;
 I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
 or of lambs, or of goats.
- 12 “When you come to ^bappear before me,
 who has required of you
 this trampling of my courts?
 13 Bring no more vain offerings;
 incense is an abomination to me.
^cNew moon and Sabbath and the ^dcalling of convocations—
 I cannot endure ^einiquity and ^fsolemn assembly.
- 14 Your ^cnew moons and your appointed feasts
 my soul hates;
 they have become a burden to me;
 I am weary of bearing them.
- 15 When you ^espread out your hands,
 I will hide my eyes from you;

¹ Or law

1:5 Why? Not even painful experience makes an impact. Their minds are closed.

1:7–8 This imagery merged into reality in the foreign invasions during Isaiah's lifetime. **the daughter of Zion.** The city of Jerusalem (37:22).

1:9 Only the power of **the LORD of hosts** has preserved God's people (1 Kings 19:18). See Rom. 9:29, where Paul quotes this verse to teach God's gracious purpose to preserve a remnant that is truly his people. There is nothing within their own nature to keep God's people from the worst of paganism and its appropriate judgment (see Gen. 13:13; 18:16–19:28; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7; Rev. 11:8).

1:10–20 These verses highlight the hypocrisy of the people's worship. Isaiah, like other prophets who comment on sacrificial practices, recog-

nizes that God appointed the system of worship and authorized the central sanctuary. But these ordinances were always intended to foster true piety among God's people, which would move them to humble purity of heart and energetic promotion of others' well-being. Isaiah denounces the way his contemporaries have divorced the ordinances from their proper purpose. It seems that they treated their worship as a way of manipulating God; they also mixed in elements from Canaanite religions (v. 29). See note on Amos 4:4–5.

1:10–17 God rejects his people's worship, however lavish, because they use it as a pious evasion of the self-denying demands of helping the weak (cf. James 1:27). Even lifting their hands in prayer avails nothing, for **your hands are full of blood** (Isa. 1:15; see 59:3).

- ^heven though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
ⁱyour hands are full of blood.
- 16 ^jWash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
^kcease to do evil,
learn to do good;
^lseek justice,
correct oppression;
^mbring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.
- 18 "Come now, ⁿlet us reason ¹ together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as ^owhite as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
- 19 ^pIf you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be eaten by the sword;
^qfor the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

The Unfaithful City

- 21 How the faithful city
^rhas become a whore,²
^sshe who was full of justice!
Righteousness lodged in her,
but now murderers.
- 22 ^tYour silver has become dross,
your best wine mixed with water.
- 23 Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone ^uloves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
^vThey do not bring justice to the fatherless,
and the widow's cause does not come to them.
- 24 Therefore the ^wLord declares,
the LORD of hosts,
the ^xMighty One of Israel:
"Ah, I will get relief from my enemies
^yand avenge myself on my foes.

¹Or dispute ²Or become unchaste

¹⁵^hProv. 1:28; Mic. 3:4
¹⁶ⁱch. 59:3
¹⁶^j[Jer. 2:22] ^k[1 Pet. 3:11]
¹⁷^jJer. 22:3 ^m[ver. 23; James 1:27]
¹⁸^mMic. 6:2; [ch. 43:26]
¹⁹^pPs. 51:7; [Rev. 7:14]
¹⁹^pDeut. 30:15, 16
²⁰^qver. 2, ch. 24:3; 40:5; 58:14; Mic. 4:4; [Num. 23:19]
²¹^qJer. 2:20; [Ex. 34:15]
²¹^q[Jer. 31:23]
²²^t[Jer. 6:30; Ezek. 22:18]
²³^uMic. 7:3; [Ex. 23:8]
²³^uJer. 5:28; Zech. 7:10; [ver. 17]
²⁴^wch. 3:1; 10:33 ^xPs. 132:2 ^y[Deut. 32:41]

1:17 seek justice, correct oppression. Doing **good** in God's sight includes seeking the just functioning of society (note, by contrast, v. 23).

1:18–20 let us reason together. Rather than continue in their incomprehension, the people are urged to consider thoughtfully their actual position before God. **though your sins are like scarlet . . . red like crimson.** Their hands, red with blood (v. 15), can be cleansed (Ps. 51:7). But they must make a deliberate choice (Isa. 1:19–20).

1:21–26 Isaiah chronicles their social abuses.

1:21 a whore. Their covenant with God was comparable to a marriage (54:5). To depart from faithfulness to him is a more shocking sin than the people realize.

1:24–28 the Lord . . . the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel. In contrast to the worthless leaders of v. 23, Israel's God is a formidable Judge. Startlingly, he calls his own people his **enemies!** But the judgment

here is not the end of the story; its purpose is to **smelt away the dross**, i.e., to remove the unbelieving members of the people (called **rebels and sinners, those who forsake the LORD**). **Afterward**, what remains will be a chastened people of God, **those . . . who repent** (i.e., who embrace their covenant privileges from the heart). **redeemed.** This word (Hb. *padah*) and its synonym (*ga'al*; see note on 41:14) generally convey the idea of rescue and protection, either for the whole people (1:27; 35:10; cf. 50:2; 51:11), or for a particular person (cf. 29:22). In some places either word carries the idea of exchanging a substitute or ransom (e.g., Ex. 13:13), but that is not relevant here. The prophet looks forward to a cleansed people after the historical judgment of the exile, restored to its mission (Isa. 2:1–5).

1:29 the oaks . . . the gardens. Suggesting pagan, and probably Canaanite, rites of worship (57:5; 65:3; 66:17) mixed into the life of God's own people.

1:31 Self-salvation, though it seems to make the people strong for a time,

25^pPs. 81:14; Amos 1:8; [ch. 5:25] ^a[Ezek. 22:20; Mal. 3:3]
 26^bJer. 33:7, 11 ^c[Zech. 8:3]
 27^dJer. 22:3, 4
 28^eJob 31:3; Ps. 1:6
 29^fHos. 4:19 ^gch. 57:5; Hos. 4:13 ^hch. 65:3; 66:17
 30ⁱ[Jer. 17:8]
 31^jJudg. 16:9 ^kch. 66:24
Chapter 2
 2^lFor ver. 2-4, see Mic. 4:1-3 ^mch. 14:13; 25:6
ⁿ[ch. 56:7]
 3^oSee Zech. 8:20-23

- 25 ^zI will turn my hand against you
and will smelt away your ^adross as with lye
and remove all your alloy.
- 26 And I will restore your judges ^bas at the first,
and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward ^cyou shall be called the city of righteousness,
the faithful city.”
- 27 ^dZion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness.
- 28 ^eBut rebels and sinners shall be broken together,
and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.
- 29 ^fFor they¹ shall be ashamed of ^gthe oaks
that you desired;
and you shall blush for ^hthe gardens
that you have chosen.
- 30 For you shall be ⁱlike an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.
- 31 And the strong shall become ^jtinder,
and his work a spark,
and both of them shall burn together,
with ^knone to quench them.

The Mountain of the LORD

2 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

- 2 ^lIt shall come to pass in the latter days
that ^mthe mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and ⁿall the nations shall flow to it,
- 3 and ^omany peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

¹ Some Hebrew manuscripts you

carries with it its own self-destruction. Apart from repentance (v. 27), the people and their syncretistic oaks and gardens (v. 29) will burn, **with none to quench them**.

2:1-4:6 *Judah's Hope, Guilt, Hope.* Within the reassuring context of glorious divine promises (2:2-4; 4:2-6), the prophet identifies the sinful human obstacles standing in the way of the promised hope (2:6-4:1).

2:1-5 *Hope.* Isaiah reveals the triumph of God's purpose for his people, when the nations will hurry to learn his ways as the only way. The fulfillment of this prophecy is foreseeable in the progress of Christian missions (see Luke 24:46-48).

2:1 This superscription marks the beginning of a new section. After the introductory, confrontational ch. 1, this section begins and ends with hope (2:2-4; 4:2-6), also taking into account the sinful human obstacles standing in the way of that hope (2:6-4:1). This vision expands the hope of 1:25-28.

2:2-4 Nearly the same wording appears in Mic. 4:1-3. It is possible that one borrowed from the other, or both used a common source; in any event the two were contemporaries and shared the same expectation for God's purpose.

2:2 The **latter days** is an expression for the future beyond the horizon (e.g., Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30; Dan. 2:28), which sometimes refers specifically to the time of the Messiah (Hos. 3:5). It is not immediately clear here whether Isaiah is

so specific, but the way Isa. 11:4 echoes 2:4 shows that the oracle speaks of the messianic era. NT authors use the various Greek translations of the expression (generally rendered “in the last days”) in the belief that, since Jesus inaugurated his messianic kingship by his resurrection, the latter days have arrived in a decisive way, while at the same time the last days await their complete realization and final fulfillment at the end of the age (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3; and probably 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18). Isaiah's future orientation in this section is also marked by his sevenfold use of “in that day” (Isa. 2:11, 17, 20; 3:7, 18; 4:1, 2) and “the LORD of hosts has a day” (2:12), including both the near and distant future. To the prophetic eye, the crises of the present are to be measured by the ultimate crisis of judgment and salvation toward which God is moving history (see Joel 2:28-3:21; Zeph. 1:7-2:3). **the mountain of the house of the LORD.** The Temple Mount in Jerusalem, though unimpressive from the lofty gaze of human religion, was God's choice (Ps. 68:15-16) and the true hope of the world (Ps. 48:1-2). **the highest of the mountains.** The gods of antiquity supposedly lived on mountains. The exaltation of the Lord's temple as the peak of world religion will be attractive to the nations. “Highest” here probably means “most exalted in honor,” not actually physically highest. **all the nations shall flow to it.** By a miraculous magnetism, a river of humanity will flow uphill to worship the one true God (see John 12:32).

2:3 out of Zion. Out of Zion alone; the Gentiles will abandon all other religions for the true God.

For ^pout of Zion shall go the law,⁴
 and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
 4 He shall judge between the nations,
 and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
^qand they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
 and their spears into pruning hooks;
^rnation shall not lift up sword against nation,
 neither shall they learn war anymore.
 5 O house of Jacob,
 come, let us walk
 in ^sthe light of the LORD.
The Day of the LORD
 6 For you have rejected your people,
 the house of Jacob,
 because they are full of things ^tfrom the east
 and ^uof fortune-tellers ^vlike the Philistines,
 and they ^wstrike hands with the children of foreigners.
 7 Their land is ^xfilled with silver and gold,
 and there is no end to their treasures;
 their land is ^yfilled with horses,
 and there is no end to their chariots.
 8 Their land is ^zfilled with idols;
 they bow down to ^athe work of their hands,
 to what their own fingers have made.
 9 So man ^bis humbled,
 and each one ^bis brought low—
 do not forgive them!
 10 ^cEnter into the rock
 and hide in the dust
^dfrom before the terror of the LORD,
 and from the splendor of his majesty.
 11 ^eThe haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
 and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled,
 and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

^{3p}[Luke 24:47; John 4:22]
^{4q}[Joel 3:10] ^{ch.} 9:7; Ps. 72:3, 7; Hos. 2:18; Zech. 9:10
^{5s}ch. 60:1, 2; [Eph. 5:8]
^{6t}[2 Kgs. 16:10, 11] ^uMic. 5:12 ^v2 Kgs. 1:2
^w[2 Kgs. 16:7, 8]
^xch. 39:2; [ch. 22:8, 11; Deut. 17:17] ^ych. 30:16; [Deut. 17:16; Mic. 5:10]
^{8z}ver. 18, 20; ch. 10:10, 11; Jer. 2:28 ^aSee ch. 44:9-17
^{9b}ch. 5:15
^{10c}ver. 19, 21; [Rev. 6:15, 16] ^dCited 2 Thess. 1:9
^{11e}ver. 17; Ps. 18:27; [Mic. 2:3; 2 Cor. 10:5]

¹Or teaching

2:4 nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Tiny Judah has been threatened by war for most of its existence. Now Isaiah predicts that, far from bringing oppression, the triumph of biblical faith will bring a peace the world has never known, when all nations **shall beat their swords into plowshares.** The description of the Messiah's reign in 11:1–10 echoes many of these themes; and 11:4 takes up the words **judge** and **decide disputes**, attributing the activity to the Messiah, in order to show that God will exercise this rule through his Messiah. Some Christian interpreters take this to describe the effect on the nations as their citizens and leaders submit to the rule of Christ; others understand this to point forward to an earthly reign of Christ in the millennium (see note on Rev. 20:1–6); still others see it as a prediction of Christ's reign in the new heavens and new earth. In any case, people of all ages have taken these words to express their longings for freedom from war, when the nations seek to follow the "ways" of "the God of Jacob" (Isa. 2:3) and when no mere human authority but the Lord Jesus himself shall judge **between the nations.**
2:5 Isaiah calls the people of God to live now in the **light** of the promised future. His exhortation applies the nations' future rallying cry in v. 3 to the people of God in the present. Judah is part of God's unfolding story, starting with Abraham's call, and the individuals within Judah must embrace their role in that story by faithfully keeping the covenant.
2:6–4:1 Guilt. In tragic contrast with the glory of the latter days (2:1–5;

4:2–6), God rejects Judah in Isaiah's time for their greed, idolatries, pride, and oppression (see Matt. 5:13).
2:6–22 Isaiah surveys the immensity of the present barriers to that happy future, but he is impressed by the Lord alone (vv. 10–11, 17, 19, 21).
2:6–8 For. The urgency of v. 5 is explained. **full . . . filled . . . no end.** Rather than the world coming to Zion to learn God's ways (vv. 2–4), the people of God in Isaiah's day are influenced by the ways of the world—to the point of saturation.
2:9 do not forgive them! Isaiah has given up on his generation. The mystery of forgiveness—for sin cannot be ignored—is revealed in ch. 53.
2:10, 19, 21 from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, boasted in terms of "the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship" in his writings. Isaiah counters all human bravado with the prophetic vision of God as the only one who is truly terrifying: **when he rises to terrify the earth** (vv. 19, 21). The Lord is the Creator of all mankind, and therefore has an interest in all mankind (not just Israel).
2:11 the LORD alone will be exalted. Isaiah sees "the haughty looks/haughtiness of man" as central to what is wrong with the world and the exclusive exaltation of the Lord as the only remedy (cf. v. 17).

12^f[Job 40:11, 12; Mal. 4:1]
 13^gch. 14:8; See Judg. 9:15
^hEzek. 27:6; Zech. 11:2
 14ⁱ[ch. 30:25]
 16^jch. 60:9; 1 Kgs. 10:22
 17^kPs. 18:27; [Mic. 2:3;
 2 Cor. 10:5]
 18^lver. 8
 19^mver. 10; Hos. 10:8;
 Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16
ⁿ[Ps. 76:8, 9; Hab. 3:6]
 20^och. 30:22; 31:7 ^pLev.
 11:19; Deut. 14:18
 21^q[See ver. 19 above]
^r[See ver. 19 above]
 22^sPs. 146:3 ^tJob 27:3;
 [James 4:14]

Chapter 3

1^uch. 1:24 ^vLev. 26:26;
 Ezek. 4:16
 2^w2 Kgs. 24:14; Ezek.
 17:13, 14

- 12 ^fFor the LORD of hosts has a day
 against all that is proud and lofty,
 against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;
 13 against all the ^gcedars of Lebanon,
 lofty and lifted up;
 and against all the ^hoaks of Bashan;
 14 against all ⁱthe lofty mountains,
 and against all the uplifted hills;
 15 against every high tower,
 and against every fortified wall;
 16 against all ^jthe ships of Tarshish,
 and against all the beautiful craft.
 17 ^kAnd the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,
 and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low,
 and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.
 18 ^lAnd the idols shall utterly pass away.
 19 ^mAnd people shall enter the caves of the rocks
 and the holes of the ground,¹
 from before the terror of the LORD,
 and from the splendor of his majesty,
ⁿwhen he rises to terrify the earth.
 20 In that day ^omankind will cast away
 their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
 which they made for themselves to worship,
 to the moles and to the ^pbats,
 21 ^mto enter the caverns of the rocks
 and the clefts of the cliffs,
 from before the terror of the LORD,
 and from the splendor of his majesty,
ⁿwhen he rises to terrify the earth.
 22 ^qStop regarding man
^rin whose nostrils is breath,
 for of what account is he?

Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

- 3
 1 For behold, the ^sLord GOD of hosts
 is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah
 support and supply,²
 all ^tsupport of bread,
 and all support of water;
 2 ^uthe mighty man and the soldier,
 the judge and the prophet,
 the diviner and the elder,

¹ Hebrew *dust* ² Hebrew *staff*

2:12–16 against all . . . against every. Ten times Isaiah asserts God's settled opposition to all human pride.

2:17 the LORD alone will be exalted. See note on v. 11.

2:20–21 their idols of silver and their idols of gold . . . to the moles and to the bats (i.e., into the ruins and caves in which they live). The precious but fraudulent ideals of the present world will be seen for the contemptible things they are and acted upon accordingly. True conversion does not quibble over the loss (cf. Phil. 3:8).

2:22 Stop regarding man. Matching the exhortation in v. 5, Isaiah urges a realistic assessment of the weakness of human power and pride.

3:1–4:6 The false and sinful glories of men and women, which are—and

deserve to be—vulnerable, are replaced by the glory of the Lord, “a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain” (4:6; cf. Ex. 13:21).

3:1–15 Bracketed by “the Lord GOD of hosts” (vv. 1, 15), this section announces God's intention to deprive Jerusalem and Judah of human leadership in their time of crisis.

3:1 For. The prophet explains why man is not to be regarded (2:22). **taking away.** See “take away” in 3:18. God takes away whatever keeps his people from him, but only in order that they might enjoy his glory (4:2–6). The words **support** and **supply** sound alike in Hebrew, and the combination suggests severe deprivation, i.e., **all support of bread, and all support of water.**

3:2–5 God judges his people by removing the leaders who were considered indispensable and replacing them with irresponsible **boys** and **infants**.

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