

THE PROFIT IN THE PROPHETS

Tonight we move from poets to prophets - into a new section of Scripture known as, "the Prophetic Books". The Hebrew prophets are divided into two sections: *the major prophets* and *the minor prophets*. The *major prophets* consist of 5 books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The *minor prophets* are the 12 books that follow: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi.

Understand, the distinctions "*major*" and "*minor*" have nothing to do with the prophet's *profit* - his importance, or the content of his message. The designation had more to do with bulk, than bite. In fact, the minor prophets carry a major message. You might say they cause a *big bang* with a *small bullet*.

The prophets themselves were men with *spiritual calling, supernatural orders, and steely courage*. They were *employed, inspired and empowered by God*.

A man became a priest through his ancestry, but he became a prophet by God's specific appointment. The prophet was God's spokesman to His people.

ISAIAH: THE FIFTH GOSPEL

The book of Isaiah has been called "*The Fifth Gospel*". Some of the clearest Messianic prophecies come from the pen of Isaiah. At the synagogue in Nazareth, when Jesus went to explain His ministry, He opened the scroll to Isaiah 61. Jesus' virgin birth, His sinless character - His life, miracles, suffering, death, resurrection, second coming, and future Kingdom are all addressed by Isaiah. In fact, the word "*Isaiah*" means "*Jehovah is salvation*". His book proves Jesus is God's Savior.

The book consists of 66 chapters. The first 39 speak of God's Law, and His judgment on a people who had violated that Law. The last 27 chapters discuss God's grace, and His plan to bring salvation to the punished nation.

Ironically, just as Isaiah consists of 66 chapters, the Bible consists of 66 books - and it too is divided along the same lines as Isaiah. The Old Testament is made up of 39 books, and speak of God's Law, and the consequences of disobedience. The 27 books of the New Testament speak of God's grace, and the plan God uses to bring about salvation. This is why Isaiah is called "*The Mini-Bible*".

IN THE DAYS OF ISAIAH

Isaiah has been called "*the prince of the prophets*". *His ministry was longer, his style more eloquent, his message more sweeping* than any of the other prophets. Isaiah served through the reigns of four different kings. He was on prophetic duty for sixty years - his watch lasted a whopping six decades - 740-680 BC.

Isaiah's writing style suggests he was highly educated. Tradition says he was a man of rank - a member of the royal family - cousin of King Uzziah.

Today even secular people recognize the name "*Isaiah*". Whereas, unless you're a scholar of ancient Eastern civilizations, names like "*Tiglath-pileser*", "*Shalmaneser*", "*Sargon*", "*Sennacherib*" are probably meaningless. Yet in the late 8th century BC these were the names that dominated world headlines - and unless you lived in Judah, the name "*Isaiah*", was the one you probably didn't recognize.

To us "*Tiglath-pileser*", "*Shalmaneser*", "*Sargon*", "*Sennacherib*" sound like names from the latest video game. But these were the kings of Assyria during the days of Isaiah. These were the names that dominated CNN headlines. They were the leaders of a rising world power - the mighty and ferocious Assyrians.

The ruthless Assyrian kings were bent on conquest, expansion and world domination. Isaiah lived his whole life in the shadow of this Assyrian threat.

In 734 BC, early in Isaiah's ministry, *Tiglath-pileser* drove his army into north Israel - sacking its villages and deporting its people. Thirteen years later, in 722 BC, his successor, Shalmaneser, laid siege to Israel's capitol, Samaria. His son, Sargon, finished the sacking of Samaria, and took her inhabitants captive. A few years later his successor, Sennacherib, drove his army further south, and pillaged the villages of Judah, eventually surrounding the city of Jerusalem in 701 BC.

For 40 years Isaiah heard the Assyrian train rumbling down the tracks - getting closer and closer to a collision. His mission was to warn the people of Judah that unless they repented, they'd suffer the same plight as their sister to the north, Israel.

BibleScan - Isaian 1-12

IN THE LATTER DAYS

Isaiah 2 begins, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days..." Today is *the day of man*. Rebellious man is having his say on planet earth – but the day will come when God will intervene. Jesus will return to earth to punish the wicked, and establish His kingdom.

We're in *the day of man* – from heaven's perspective these are the *former days*. When Jesus returns He'll usher in *the day of the Lord*, or what the Bible calls, "the latter days..." That's Isaiah's focus here.

In the latter days God will bring a revival to Israel – a renewed hunger for God. When Jesus returns He'll also bring peace on earth, good will toward men. 2:4 is a famous verse, "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

There's a stone wall at the United Nations that bears an inscription. It's the second half of Isaiah 2:4. Ironically, it was a gift from the former Soviet Union. It's no surprise though that the godless, atheistic Soviets left off the first half of verse 4. Hey, there can be no real peace without true righteousness. And righteousness won't come until Jesus, the Prince of Peace, returns to judge the nations.

Isaiah 2:10 warns us of God's future judgment. Revelation 6 depicts cataclysmic events that will occur on earth prior to the return of Jesus. The upheaval will be so severe people will hide in holes and caves.

Here Isaiah warns, "Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty." I like what J Vernon McGee said, "I don't know whether men were ever cavemen or not, but... in the future... men will be living in caves."

EASTERN WAYS

Sadly, Isaiah 2:6 could've been written of the United States. God will forsake us for the same reason He forsook Israel, "they are filled with eastern ways; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners."

Rather than remain committed to our Judeo-Christian heritage our culture has elevated and embraced eastern philosophy and new age religion. In former days the preferred choice for stress relief was prayer - today it's Yoga or transcendental meditation. In former days ball players prayed and asked God to help them perform their best. Today, they breathe and visualize.

The secular vocabulary has changed. Biblical terms have been replaced with eastern inferences. Bad circumstances are no longer described as "*God's test or judgment*". They're called, "*bad karma*". The other day I heard a pastor use the expression, "*in a former life*". I know the pastor doesn't believe in reincarnation, but it was evidence of how eastern thought has permeated western culture, and our common vocabulary.

Biblical truth is no longer bedrock. We've come full circle. Christianity liberated the world from eastern philosophy. It spawned an incredible prosperity in the West. Now rather than thanking God - we've rejected the truth, and re-embraced the lie.

The day is coming when God will humble all mankind. Isaiah says in 2:11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day."

It reminds me of the elder statesman talking to a freshman senator. He looked out his Washington office window at the Potomac River, and pointed to an old log. "Washington is like that log. There are probably 100,000 grubs, ants, bugs, and critters on that old log as it floats down the river. And I imagine every one of them thinks he's steering it." That's true of every city.

One day all men and women will learn that none of us are the captain of our own ship. God calls the shots. God is in control. He alone is Master and Lord.

Understand chapters 2-5 constitute a single prophecy. It refers to the judgment God will bring to pass in the "latter days". In chapter 4 Isaiah refers to three events that occur in the wake of that judgment. *The Branch, a remnant, a restoration*.

The "branch" is Jesus. Verse 2 tells us, "In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious..." David was the head of the royal family in Israel, and God promised him an eternal king to rise from his lineage. This promised king came to be known as the "branch" - or an off-shoot of David's family tree.

After the judgment of the Great Tribulation Jesus will return to earth to establish His kingdom. He'll reign and rule over a remnant of believing Jews. Verse 2 refers to those Jews as "those of Israel who have escaped."

A restoration will follow. Verse 5 tells us God's glory will return to Israel in the form of a cloud by day and fire by night. God will again dwell with His people.

Devotion Box - As Smart As A Ox?

In Isaiah 1:3 God bemoans the tendencies of His people, "The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider."

An Israeli policeman in Haifa, recently used this verse to bust a burglary ring. The thieves were loading their loot on an ox to make their get-away. When one of the oxen was caught it was made to go hungry for a few days, then turned loose. And just as Isaiah said, it returned to "its master's crib." The crooks were arrested.

You've heard the old metaphor, "as dumb as an ox" – apparently, an ox is not so dumb. Isaiah is saying that Israel was not as smart as an ox. An ox knows where to turn when it gets hungry - where to find the sustenance it needs.

What about you, *are you dumber than an ox?* Where do you turn when a spiritual hunger sets in? *Do you take a pill? Run up a bill? Take a drink? Consult a shrink?* Hey, it doesn't take a smart guy to figure out the place to turn is Jesus. Even an ox returns to its owner's crib. At the feet of Jesus you'll find feed.

ISAIAH 7-9: IMMANUEL

Chapters 7-9 have as their backdrop the most underrated story in the Old Testament. Most kids can recite stories like: *David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, Daniel in the lion's den, Moses at the burning bush*, but few have even heard of the story in 2 Kings 19:35. It's so important, God chose to record it 3 times in Scripture – 2 Kings 19, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 37.

In 701 BC the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem. After successful sieges - against the Syrian capitol of Damascus, and the Israeli capitol of Samaria - the Assyrians set their sights on the Judean capitol of Jerusalem. At least 185,000 soldiers were camped outside Zion's walls poised to strike. Guys, an army of nearly 200,000 troops is about the population of the city of Columbus, GA.

Isaiah, and King Hezekiah prayed for a miracle. The people went to bed on the brink of annihilation. The next morning they awoke to a pleasant surprise. An angel of the Lord had come in the night and had slaughtered 185,000 of the Assyrians. The angel was "*Immanuel*".

Isaiah 7-9 set the stage for that amazing night by introducing the major players in the drama.

CHAPTER 7 - IMMANUEL: VIRGIN BORN BABE

God promised King Ahaz that an army would defeat Judah's enemies, Syria and Israel. The army would be the Assyrians. As a sign that God would keep his promise we're told verse 14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Which means "*God with us*". What a sign!

When the angel appears to Joseph to tell him that Mary has conceived a son through the Holy Spirit this is the verse he uses in his explanation.

Understand the virgin birth of Jesus is not a peripheral doctrine. It's crucial to our faith. The genetics of salvation require a virgin birth. Sin is passed from Adam – through the father. If a human father had sired Jesus he would've been born with sin, and His death could never be substitutionary. For Jesus to die for you and me it was necessary for Him to be born sinless. The virgin birth enabled Jesus to be as human as his mother Mary, yet as sinless and divine as God in heaven.

Isaiah says in verse 15, "Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse evil and choose the good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings..."

Curds and honey were baby food, thus he's saying, before this miraculous child reaches adulthood the Syrians and Israel will no longer be a serious threat. It was 730 years before the child of the prophecy was born. But if Jesus had been born that day the time frame would've still been valid. A Hebrew child celebrates his *bar-mitzvah*, or his passage into adulthood, at age 12. In less than 12 years the Assyrians had wiped out both Syria, and Israel.

Verses 18-19 tell us, "The LORD will whistle... for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. They will come..." Assyria will turn Syria and Israel into a wasteland.

CHAPTER 8 - IMMANUEL: MIGHTY CONQUEROR

In Isaiah 8:6-10 the Assyrian army is viewed as an overflowing river that swells its banks and floods not only Syria and Israel, but also Judah. The people of Ahaz would also have drowned in the Assyrian surf had it not been for "*Immanuel*". Remember, this name appeared in chapter 7 – the name of the Child born of a virgin. And this is the name the angel gave Jesus in Matthew 1.

Notice verse 8, "(The king of Assyria) will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel." Verse 9 warns far-away countries that they'll be broken in pieces. And the reason... "For God is with us" (*Immanuel*).

This is where the plot thickens... Jesus is Immanuel, and did Jesus play a role in Judah's deliverance from the hands of the Assyrians? I believe He did.

Remember, it was an angel of the Lord who came at night and slew 185,000 Assyrians. "Angel" means "messenger". At times it refers to an angelic messenger, but not always. There are Old Testament examples where the Angel of the Lord was a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. I believe that's what happened here.

And that's why Joseph must've marveled when Mary's baby was identified as "*Immanuel*" - God's destroyer. A mighty warrior, able to take out a whole army of marauding Assyrians with a single blow - was willing to humble Himself, make Himself vulnerable, enter the world through the lowest door – be born a baby.

The Assyrians flooded the land until Immanuel stepped up to stop them.

CHAPTER 9 - IMMANUEL: THE CHILD, THE SON

Isaiah 9:6-7 tell us, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; Jesus was fully human – a newborn child. He was also fully divine – God's greatest gift, His only Son."

Before Jesus was laid in a manger He sat upon the throne in heaven. Before He became the Bethlehem babe – He was Immanuel, God's mighty warrior.

"and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The virgin born babe will eventually rule over God's kingdom for all eternity.

Look closely at this portrait of Jesus... He's a *Wonderful Counselor*. He's also *Mighty God* and *Everlasting Father*. He's the "*Prince of Peace*". Jesus brings peace to our hearts – to our minds – to our relationships. One day when He returns He'll spread peace around the world.

"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever." Note, Jesus will sit on the throne of David – a Jewish throne. God will restore the kingdom to Israel. There are those who claim God is through with Israel. The promises He made to the Jews have been inherited by the Church. But not so! Jesus is a Jewish King who will reign over Israel.

"The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Bible Scan - Isaiah 1-12

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - November 5, 2000 - Pick up the November issue of LikeMinds - Ladies Night Out, 11/6 at 6:45 - Financial Faithfulness Seminar, Fri /Sat, 11/17-18 (check the Announcement Sheet) - For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm - Middle School Hayride and Bonfire, Fri 11/11, 6:00 - Next Bible Scan - November 12 - Isaiah 13-39

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

Bible Scan
Memory
Verse

ISAIAH'S VISION OF GOD

Chapter 6 begins, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." Hebrew tradition suggests Isaiah was the younger cousin of Uzziah. King Uzziah was a godly man, and may've mentored his cousin. It's possible Uzziah was a spiritual father to Isaiah just as Paul was to Timothy, or Moses was to Joshua. The older Uzziah taught and loved and guided the younger Isaiah. *But now Uzziah is gone!*

I'm sure Isaiah missed his wisdom - his leadership. Isaiah had lived his whole life in the spiritual shadow of Uzziah, now he finds himself on his own!

We all have or will experience the same predicament. For some people it occurs when they leave home, and the nurturing of godly parents. For other folks it happens when a close friend or spiritual mentor moves out of state. For still others it occurs when they have to move to a new location, away from the good fellowship, and steady influence of a former church.

As much as the prophet missed Uzziah, God wanted Isaiah to trust in Him, not some mentor. Now without Uzziah it forces Isaiah to dial direct, and do business with God Himself. It was time for Isaiah to forge his own relationship with God.

It's been said, "When you have nothing left but God, then

for the first time you become aware that God is enough." That's exactly what Isaiah learned. In that same year Isaiah's new faith produced a firsthand relationship with God.

Isaiah was given a glimpse into the throne room of God. He saw the Lord in all His glory. Seraphim hovered around the throne praising God for His holiness.

You'd think Isaiah would say "Wow", instead his reaction was "Woe". Up against God's glory all he could focus on was his own sin and slackness. That's when one of the angels took a coal from off the altar and purified his lips.

Suddenly, Isaiah was in a place where he could hear God speak, and he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" (*Notice the Lord referred to Himself by the plural pronoun a reference to the trinity.*) Isaiah was eager. He immediately volunteered, "Here am I! Send me." I hope we're as eager to be sent? And the Lord told him, "Go..."

God's word to us all is "Go," but before we're to go there first comes a woe! We are not fit to be used by God until we're first broken - and nothing will break us of our pride and selfishness quicker than a vision of God. At the top of our list of needs is a fresh vision of God's glory and holiness.

Devotion Box - Don't Touch The Glory

God used Assyria to judge Syria, and Israel – but just because you are used by God doesn't mean you're exempt from His judgment. Every pastor, church leader, and servant of God needs to take heed. God used a donkey to speak to Balaam. Just because God uses you doesn't mean He's pleased with everything you do. He says in 10:5, "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation." Chapter 10 describes God's judgment on the Assyrians.

What happened to Assyria can happen to us. Success will inflate the head. Assyria assumed her victories were the result of her own military might. She figured God's city, Jerusalem, would fall just like the other cities. But Assyria figured wrong. Verses 12-13 explain God's plan, "Therefore it shall come to pass, when the LORD has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom..." He failed to give the credit to God.

Listen to verse 15, "Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it?" Who are we to get proud and puffed up. We're just the ax in the lumberjack's hands. We're just an instrument, a tool. The glory and honor belong to God.

Corrie Ten Boom told the story of the woodpecker pounding away at the tree when suddenly a lightning bolt split the tree down the middle. The bird went away bragging about its powerful beak. Guys, never touch the glory. Give it to God.