

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### ISAIAH

Of the prophet who bears this name little is known. He was the son of Amoz, a person of course not to be identified with the prophet, Amos.

A current Jewish tradition, according to Home, connected Isaiah with the blood-royal, his father being the son of Joash and brother of Amaziah, king of Judah. Jerome, on the authority of some rabbinical writers, says that the prophet gave his daughter in marriage to King Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah. How much of this traditional information is to be received as worthy of credence it might be difficult to determine, perhaps very little of it.

There is more ground for believing that the prophet suffered death in the early reign of Manasseh, being martyred for his infidelity to the truth of which he had borne the noblest and most constant testimony. It is said that he was sawn asunder by order of that bloody tyrant, the Diocletian of Jewish history. Hebrews 11:37, is thought by many to allude to Isaiah's death.

His extraordinary call to the office of prophet is recorded in the sixth chapter of his book. It is not meant that Isaiah did not exercise his ministry to some extent before the great vision recorded in chapter six took place. But by it he was inaugurated into the great work to which, in an especial manner, he was now called.

It was in the year Uzziah died that the vision was vouchsafed him which changed the whole current of his life and which, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, made him the man he was. Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne high and lifted up. Cherubs, with veiled faces and veiled feet, surrounded the enthroned One as guards round the King. From side to side went up a hymn of praise, the heavenly hosts chanting with tireless energy the holiness of the Lord.

All the young man's sins, all the sins of the nation rushed upon him with overwhelming force. **"Woe is me, for I am undone,"** he cried.

In the presence of the dazzling brightness and infinite glory of the throne he felt himself to be a man of unclean lips, "the foul-mouthed son of a foul-mouthed race."

On those defiled lips the swift seraph laid the flaming coal from the flaming altar. This signified the removing of pollution and the creation of that marvelous style of speech which has entranced the world. From that time forward Isaiah possessed in the highest degree the prophetic gift, a message from God and the power to utter it in the most forcible language. Both the message and the speech were communicated to him from God Himself.

The heavenly voice asked: **“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”** With unhesitating devotion the young man replied, **“Here am I; send me.”** It was his supreme call and commission.

The circle of hearers on whom his ministry was assigned immediately to operate was Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah was the prophet of Judah. While he spoke of Syria, Moab, Egypt, Tyre, Assyria, Babylon, etc., nevertheless these nations were introduced because of their connection with the kingdom of Judah.

It was not for their benefit he prophesied, but for the people of Judah alone now become the sole home of Jewish blessings and of hope. His ministry was to be a strangely barren one, 6:9-13; at least so far as the world judges.

The louder he should cry the less would the people hear and understand.

Under his testimony, powerful as it should be, worse and more obdurate would they become until judicial blindness, God’s heaviest punishment in this world, should settle down upon them. Both the Lord Jesus and Paul allude to the awful effect of refusing the words of God, the hardening process which is sure to follow unbelief, Matthew 13:14, 15; Acts 28:25-27.

History evermore repeats itself. The Jews of Isaiah’s time had their counterpart in those of Jesus’ and Paul’s day. Nor is it otherwise now.

**Refuse the divine message, and keep on refusing it; and the time will come when all you can do is to refuse, when the ears cannot hear and the eyes are fast closed in sleep.**

Besides, Isaiah’s ministry was to be one largely made up of the reiterations of “commonplaces.” The sad, plaintive cry, **“Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little,”** 28:10, 11, was to be a prominent feature in his work and testimony. “Commonplaces!” It is the work of God’s messengers still, often sorrowful enough!

Isaiah’s ministry extended over a long period, at least over the reigns in whole or in part, of four kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, 1:1. Probably but little of his prophetic career belonged to the reign of Uzziah. From the book itself it cannot be determined whether any prophecy was delivered during the time of Jotham. But it should be remembered that Uzziah was a leper in the closing years of his life, and Jotham, his son, was probably regent during the time, II Kings 15:5; II Chronicles 26:21 (Uzziah and Azariah are identical). His prophetic activity lasted it is thought by many, for sixty years, perhaps for sixty-five. Rawlinson’s conjectural estimate of his lifetime is ninety years—B. B. 780 and B. C. 690—which would make him contemporary with Manasseh for the space of nine years.

*Isaiah's character is one of great boldness and earnestness.*

Toward sin of every kind, he is everywhere uncompromising. Fraud, oppression, dishonesty, hypocrisy, idolatry, apostasy, he denounces with a vehemence that is unparalleled. "He conceals nothing, keeps nothing back, out of a desire for court favor."

- **"Is it a small thing for you to weary men?"** he says to one king; **"but must ye weary my God also?"** 7:13.

- **"Set thine house in order,"** he says to another, **"for thou shalt die and not live,"** 38:1.

But he is not all sternness. Some of his passages are unsurpassed for tenderness and compassion and love. Where can anything be found which for pathos equals this, **"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,"** 40:1, 2; **"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,"** 46:13, as if the great God, like a gentle mother, took up into His mighty arms His poor, weeping people, and hushed their sobbings, and rocked them to rest on His own infinite heart.

*His horizon is broader than that of most of the prophets.*

While Judah and Jerusalem are the great themes of his prophetic utterances and are nearer his heart than any others, yet the Gentiles are his brother men also, and for them sublime predictions are made, and their future is painted in as glowing colors of beauty and glory as that of Israel itself. Nay, the weary earth and tired nature, the very beasts of the field, together with toiling and suffering man, universal man are yet to share in the glorious salvation of our God.

*Then, too, his spirituality and deep reverence should not be overlooked.*

With David he sees clearly that outward forms and ceremonies are not the true religion, nor sacrifices, nor assemblies of worshiping people, nor days, nor fasts, nor temples, constitute true religion, are of no value in the sight of God if purity of heart and genuine obedience and whole-hearted consecration to the service and worship of God are absent.

Isaiah is the evangelical prophet. He speaks of Christ and of His redemption with almost the same clearness and fullness as an evangelist or an apostle.

His name, Isaiah, signifies the salvation of the Lord, and it, together with the names of his two sons, are thought by Dr. Forbes to be introduced into the prophecies with great beauty and force on the principle of rhetoric known as paronomasia, i. e., play on the name, viz.,

- Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("*speed, spoil, hastens the prey*"), 8:1, 3;

- Shear-jashub ("*a remnant shall return*"), 10:4-34;

- Isaiah ("*Salvation of the Lord*"), 11, 12.

That these three names are wrought into the chapters above cited, can hardly be doubted. The same remark holds likewise as to the name, Immanuel, 8:5-9, 7.

1. *The title and authentication of the book, chap, 1:1:*

**“The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”**

This verse is not the preface to the first chapter or to any small portion of the book, as is evident from the enumeration of the four kings; it is a sort of caption to the entire volume. But more, the verse is designed to be a witness and a seal of the source and integrity of the contents of the book.

It is very noteworthy that all the prophetic books have just such an endorsement as this of Isaiah, and almost invariably the authentication is found at the opening of the writing. Daniel appears to be an exception; but ch. 1:17, is the voucher for that prophet. The same literary peculiarity, as we may venture to call it, distinguishes the epistolary writings of the New Testament. Paul begins his letters with such an authentication as is found in the prophets. So, likewise, do James, Peter, and Jude. John writes the opening sentence of the Apocalypse with just such an appeal to the divine origin of the predictions contained in his book as the Old Testament seers employ. The Holy Spirit, who is the real Author of the Bible, has thus stamped His majestic imprimatur on the great prophetic and epistolary writings. He would be rash and reckless indeed who would essay to remove it!

2. *Isaiah may be conveniently divided into three great parts.*

Part I, Chs. 1-35.

Part II, Chs. 36-39.

Part III., Chs. 40-46.

In Parts I and III, there are three main groups of prophecies, while in Part II there is but one subject mainly, viz., historical events in connection with the reign of Hezekiah.

Part I of the book may be distributed into the three following groups of prophecies:

(1) Reproofs, warnings, and promises addressed chiefly to Judah and Jerusalem, together with hopes held forth to the Gentiles, chaps, 1-13.

This section ends with a glowing announcement of the blessed day coming, the millennial day, when all the promises of God will have their ample fulfillment, chaps, 11-13.

Israel's conversion and the joy of the whole earth in consequence are rapturously described.

The antagonisms in nature, the wrongs and oppressions and cruelties practiced by men against one another, in short, the miseries and wretchedness and bitterness of life as it now is in the world, will all be done away, and righteousness and peace and universal rest and blessing cover the whole world as a mantle of joy.

(2) Predictions respecting the nations which were specially hostile to Judah, chaps, 13-23.

Some eight nations are named, among them the great powers of Babylon, Syria, Egypt and Tyre. Their sin and doom are graphically depicted.

(3) Predictions of judgment on the world, on Samaria and Judah and sins and wickedness which provoke the judgment, the Assyrian invasion and destruction of Samaria, the alarm, distress, and final deliverance of Jerusalem, chaps, 24-35.

The section terminates with another magnificent description of the coming glory, 35.

Part II contains the historical chapters, 36-39. Two of them, 36, 37, relate the story of the Assyrian invasion and its results; the others, 38, 39, Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, and the incident of the Babylonian ambassadors.

The first two chapters face Part I of the book, the last two, Part III. These historical chapters are the bridge between the two great sections of the prophecy, binding thus into one the entire volume.

Part III consists of chaps, 40-46. The predictions contained in this section of Isaiah are surpassingly grand as to style, transcendently lofty as to conception, most precious in all the wealth of promise and assurance as to the future of God's people and the world itself. With consummate art the prophet has east his inspired writing into three main divisions, each of which ends with a most solemn note of warning to the wicked.

(1) 40-43. The antithesis of the Lord and idols, Israel and the nations, ending with the knell of judgment, "**There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.**"

(2) 49-57. The antithesis between the sufferings of the Servant of the Lord and the glory which should follow, ending with a more emphatic note of warning than the former, "**there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.**"

(3) 58-66. The antithesis between the hypocrites and the faithful, between the immoral and the self-indulgent, and the mourners and the persecuted for righteousness' sake, between the world of sin and sorrow that now is, and the world of blessedness and holiness and purity which is to be, ending with the heaviest note of judgment of all, "**For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.**"

The central theme of the first division of these magnificent predictions is comfort, the comfort of the Lord's people in prospect of their exile and suffering at Babylon, and the assurance of their deliverance and restoration through God's chosen instrument and servant, Cyrus the Persian. The central theme of the second division is the Servant of the Lord, the promised Messiah, who by His first advent in humiliation will bring in everlasting righteousness and salvation for God's people, and who by His second advent will introduce millennial and eternal glory. And the central theme of the third division is the realization of the promised glory.

Broadly, therefore, we say that the book of Isaiah is made up of seven grand divisions,

- Three in Part I,
- One in the four historical chapters,
- Three in Part III, chaps, 40-46.

About the question of the unity of Isaiah, controversy rages. Believers in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible insist that the Prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, is the author of the book that bears his name. This the higher critics strenuously deny. One of them (Ewald) imagines he can trace seven different hands in its composition. The majority, however, content themselves with asserting a twofold authorship, viz.: Proto-Isaiah, chaps, 1-39, probably written by the prophet; and Deutero-Isaiah, chaps, 40-46, by the "Great Unknown," i. e., by some very remarkable prophet who lived during the time of the exile at Babylon and about the time of Cyrus.

Difference of style used to be urged as a strong argument in support of this theory, but it is now almost entirely abandoned. The arguments now advanced are briefly these:

- (1) In Isaiah 40-46, the writer speaks as if he were actually living in the times he describes.
- (2) It is not the ordinary method of prophecy to enter into detail, and minutely describe events, as is done in these chapters.
- (3) The captivity, the fall of Babylon, Cyrus, Messiah's suffering and Israel's restoration, are all given with such minuteness of detail as to preclude the belief that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who lived some 170 years before could have been the author.

Something of the true nature of the higher criticism is thus disclosed. It virtually denies that the prophets of God foretold anything future which was disconnected with their own times. That the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is the author of the whole book is firmly held by the present writer. The reasons for this belief are for him amply sufficient, amounting to a demonstration.

Only some of them are here given.

- (1) The novelty of the theory makes against it.

For seventeen hundred years and more it was never heard of among the scholars of the church. One Jew, of the twelfth century, Aben Ezra, was the only writer, so far as is now known, that ever broached it. In fact, the theory is hardly a hundred years old. It would be well for us to bear in mind the old adage,

"What is true is not new;  
And what is new is not true."

- (2) The gross ignorance of the critics as to the "Great Unknown" makes against the theory.

Consider how forcible this argument becomes, had we the space and the time to draw it out in its full strength. Here is a writing the most transcendently eloquent, comforting, instructive, impressive, formative, and influential of the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures if we except Daniel; chaps. 42, 53, 60, 61, etc., have swayed the thought and animated the hope and encouraged the faith of God's people, both Israelitish and Christian, for centuries.

- It upheld the exiles at Babylon;
- It led Cyrus to issue his decree for the return of the captives;
- It kept bright the expectation in pious Jewish hearts of the coming of Messiah;
- It has led many a sinner to the Saviour.

And yet nobody knows who wrote it! It is the product of the "Great Unknown."

The Septuagint version knows no other author of the book than Isaiah. Yet this ancient translation, B. C. 250, and earlier, does not hesitate to ascribe the various Psalms to different authors, as, e. g., David, Asaph, Jeremiah, Haggai, Ethan, etc.; but makes no hint of a composite composition of Isaiah.

(4) The son of Sirach, author of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, about B. C. 180, definitely ascribes this portion of the book (40-46) to Isaiah, the prophet, and speaks of him in such fashion as to preclude the idea that any other than he was ever conjectured to be the author of it.

(5) Cyrus' decree, Ezra 1:1, 2, is proof that the section of Isaiah under inspection was written before the captivity.

In it the monarch refers to the wording of the prophecies concerning himself, Isaiah 44:27, 28; 45:1-3. The words of the edict are copied from these passages. Now is it credible that Cyrus would be influenced so powerfully as to issue his proclamation thus worded if the prophecy were uttered in his own day and by a contemporary? Josephus testifies that these prophecies concerning himself were shown Cyrus, and it was on account of them he published his decree for the Jews' return, and for the rebuilding of the temple.

(6) The historical chapters, 38, 39, prepare the way for chaps. 40-66, and in reality assert the connection of Hezekiah and Isaiah with them. "**All that is in thine house shall be carried to Babylon, and thy sons shall be eunuchs in the king's palace.**"

(7) The witness of the New Testament to the Isaiah authorship of these disputed chapters is explicit and abundant. According to Westcott and Hort the whole book of Isaiah is quoted and referred to more than 210 times; chaps. 40-46 more than one hundred times.

These references and quotations are varied, specific and inexplicable save on the supposition that the New Testament writers knew no author of the book except the son of Amoz. With them the book is no compilation; they recognize no "hand" in it but that of Isaiah. With them the book is the words of the prophet Isaiah, who spoke by the Holy Spirit.

- Matthew declares that the writer of chapter forty-two was Isaiah, Matthew 12:17, 18.
- Luke testifies that chapter fifty-three was written by Isaiah, Acts 8:28-35; that chapter sixty-one was written by Isaiah, Luke 4:17.
- Paul ascribes chapters fifty-three and sixty-five to the same prophet, Romans 10:16, 20.

Let it also be particularly noted that in every possible way the New Testament writers attribute the entire book to Isaiah. They speak of him again and again as “**the prophet Isaiah,**” “**Isaiah, the prophet,**” Matthew 3, 3; 8, 7, etc., i. e., when they would make prominent the man Isaiah they give first his name and second his official title; when the office of the man is to be emphasized the title precedes and his name follows. They mention, too, “**the book of the prophet Isaiah,**” Luke 4:17; and “**the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,**” Luke 3, 4, etc. That is, the inspired writers of the New Testament distinguish between the “**book of Isaiah**” and the, “**prophet Isaiah**” who wrote the book.

Prophecy deals mainly with three subjects which are inseparably connected, viz.: Israel, Messiah, and the kingdom of God. That all three are conspicuously found in this book even the most cursory reader sees. It would be difficult to determine which has the larger place. Read from one point of view Isaiah appears to be wholly absorbed with the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem; whatever else is introduced is subordinate or incidental. From another it is the promised Deliverer, the mighty Servant of the Lord, who fills the entire horizon of the prophetic vision, in whom every promise and purpose of God shall have its ample accomplishment.

1. *The prophet foretells the Messiah's incarnation, 7:14.*

That this prediction relates to the Lord Jesus Christ is manifest from Matthew 1:18-25. No child of ordinary birth can be meant by the prophet, for He is to be the child of “**the virgin,**” certainly of an unmarried female. He is to bear the great name Immanuel, “**God with us.**”

It should be borne in mind that from the very beginning the Messiah was to be the offspring in an extraordinary sense of the woman, Genesis 3:25. Difficulties, it is freely acknowledged, envelop this prediction, nor can any attempt now be made to clear them away. The words of a profound student of the Bible (Prof. Cave) are worth quoting: “This Deliverer, the Branch of the Lord, is afterward announced as the Son of a virgin, before whose birth the two Hebrew kingdoms shall have ceased to be monarchies.”

Whatever interpretation be adopted, it must satisfy these conditions:

- (1) It must yield a sense worthy of the grandeur of verse eleven;
- (2) the Child must be of David's house, and the glory of it;
- (3) He must be divine as His name Immanuel asserts;
- (4) His dignity must be superhuman.

2. *The dignity of His person is announced by the sublime titles given Him, 9:6.*

What a group of names is here found!

He is identified with our race, for He is “**a child born, a son given,**” the Son of man. But He is much more,

- He is God.
- He is wonderful—in His person, work, love and grace;
- He is the counsellor—the prophet, greater than Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, than any and all the prophets;
- He is the Revealer of the Father, John 1:18;
- He is the mighty God, Himself God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father;
- He is the Father of eternity, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Prince of Peace, the promised Shiloh, Genesis 49:10; Luke 2:10-14.

3. *He is to be of the house of David and sit on David’s throne, 9:7; 11:1; and He will be endowed with all the gifts and powers needed for the universal government which He is to sway, 11:2-4.*

4. *His forerunner and harbinger is foretold, 40:3-5; comp. Matthew 3:1-3. John was only a voice, what every preacher of Christ should be.*

5. *The character of His ministry and His qualifications for its execution are described, 13:1-7.*

What wisdom and grace, what tenderness and power, courage and humility, lowliness and loftiness, stooping and conquering are here predicted of Him.

6. *His prophetic office is announced, 41:1-3.*

In Luke 4:18, 19, our Lord read these words in the synagogue at Nazareth; but it is very noteworthy that He stopped short in the second verse at a comma, “**To preach the acceptable year of the Lord,**” He could not add, “**And the day of vengeance of our God;**” for that day was not come, nor is it yet. Our whole dispensation of grace lies in that comma. How infinitely accurate is Scripture!

7. *The priestly office is foretold, chap. 53.*

Let us note some things from this amazing chapter:

I. *He is to be a suffering Messiah, vss. 1-3.*

“**Despised,**” “**rejected,**” “**man of sorrows,**” grief-smitten, “**like one from whom men hide their faces.**”

II. *Messiah’s sufferings vicarious.*

There are at least twelve assertions of this truth:

(1) “**Borne our griefs;**”

- (2) “**carried our sorrows;**”
- (3) “**wounded for our transgressions;**”
- (4) “**bruised for our iniquities;**”
- (5) “**chastisement of our peace;**”
- (6) “**His stripes;**”
- (7) “**Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all;**”
- (8) “**For the transgression;**”
- (9) “**it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;**”
- (10) “**soul an offering for sin;**”
- (11) “**bear their iniquities;**”
- (12) “**bear the sin of many.**”

How anyone in the face of this Scripture can deny the substitutionary nature of Christ’s atonement is almost incredible.

### III. *His sufferings propitiatory.*

This truth lies in the four expressions as to bearing sin:

1. Ver. 6, “**The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**”
2. Ver. 10, “**Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.**”
3. Ver. 11:1 “**He shall bear their iniquities.**”
4. Ver. 12, “**He shall bear the sin of many,**” II Corinthians 5:21.

*Israel’s Restoration*, Isaiah 11:11, 12, 15, 16.

The language of the prophet is precise. He announces, or rather the Spirit of the Lord by him, that the “**Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people.**” “**The second time**” cannot be the first time. It is a future restoration that is meant; and it is still future, unless, as many think, it is already begun in the marvelous events of our own days touching this strange, indestructible people. How they are to be brought back again to their own land and to the favor and blessing of God; how the “land” (Palestine) is to become fertile beyond all antecedence; how the whole world is to share in Israel’s blessing, is fully foretold by Isaiah, 2:1-5; 11; 35; 49:22, 23; 42:4; 27:6; 46:19, 20, etc.

*Promises respecting the Gentiles*, 11:1, 10; (cf. Romans 15:12); 41:1, 6; (cf. Matthew 12:17-21); 49:6; 40:3; (cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47).

*Millennial Blessedness.* No prophet of the Old Testament is so full of this most attractive subject as Isaiah; none gives us so comprehensive a view of it.

- The vast cosmical changes which accompany its introduction;
- The revolution in all the ways and habits of men it involves,
- Its characteristic features, are the themes of this matchless pen.

A meager outline of some of the more prominent things connected with it is here given.

1. Binding and imprisonment of Satan, the cause of the world's woe, 24:21, 22; 27:1; cf. Revelation 20:1-3. We may be quite sure that no reign of peace and bliss is possible for the earth so long as this strong, fierce spirit is loose.

2. War shall cease, nor be learned or practiced more, 2:4; 9:5. Most graphic is the last sentence above quoted, "**And every garment rolled in blood shall be for burning, even fuel for the fire.**" It is estimated that there are now under arms in Europe more than five millions of men, with ten millions of reserves, all ready to fly at each other's throats at the bidding of their masters. The world-power, though Christian in name, is still a wild, ferocious "beast."

3. Antagonisms between man and man, and between man and the lower animals will be removed, and harmony, universal and unbroken, will prevail, 11:6-9; 45:25. It will hardly do to say, as some do, that this explicit prediction as to the removal of hostility between animals means peace among nations and communities of men. For this is in addition to predictions of harmony among men. What is meant is, that man's supremacy over the lower creation will, in that day, be like what it was before the fall of Adam; creation will be restored to its original harmony as the final outcome of God's work of redemption, (cf. Romans 8:19-23).

4. The "**outcast of Israel,**" and the "**dispersed of Judah,**" gathered once more into their own land from all the countries whither they have been scattered, will be converted to God in a supernatural manner, and become a source of blessing to the whole world, 11:10-16; 26:13-16; 27:12-13; 49:12, 22,23; 59:20; 66:7-12.

5. The resurrection of Israel's faithful dead, as likewise that of Gentile believers (I Thessalonians 4:13,18; I Corinthians 15), to share the joy of the world's redemption will be another glad triumph of that day, 26:19; cf. Daniel 12:1-3; Ezekiel 37:12; Hosea 13:14, etc.

6. Patriarchal years will return, 45:20. "Life will be protracted to its full measure, so that he who dies at the age of one hundred years will be regarded as having died young, and the sinner on whom the curse or punishment of God falls will at least have his one hundred years of life." Sin and death will still exist in that blissful day, but according to the plain teaching of Isaiah they will be the exception and not the rule as now, 25: 6-9; 26:1-4; 35:10.

7. There will be a sevenfold fullness and increase of light, solar and lunar, in that day, 30:26; 60:19, 20.

Such are some of the glories God has promised for His ancient people, Israel, for the Gentiles who call on His name, and for the earth itself. It is the grand jubilee of the whole world we await. As certain as God has spoken it will be realized. How near it may be we cannot compute.

Isaiah's *admonitions to the nation* is are most solemn. He reveals this great principle of the divine government, viz., that those nations which were employed to chastise the chosen people were held as guilty before Him. In every instance they exceeded their commission, they refused to show mercy to the captives; they executed their own cruel will on the helpless, and so in turn they were punished, 13, 14, 21, 33, 47:6.

Assyria's overthrow, Babylon's fall, and Egypt's humiliation are ascribed to their unmerciful treatment of Israel; and yet they were all used as His rods for the correction of his people.

Before we leave the book of Isaiah some of the predictions with which it abounds and their fulfillment may be adverted to.

1. *The fall of Babylon and its subsequent desolation*, 13.

So explicit is this event described by the spirit of prophecy that it might appropriately be called history written beforehand.

The army which is to accomplish this task is summoned from the mountains, from a distant land, vs. 4—Persia, no doubt, is meant. But Persia is not to act alone; other peoples join the mustering squadrons, Media more especially, vs. 17.

The Lord of hosts calls them to execute His judgments on the guilty city, vs. 2, 3, 11, 19; and the earth trembles beneath the tread of marching men in response. It is declared that fear shall take possession of the doomed city; panic-stricken, it shall make no defence, vs. 8. How exactly this was fulfilled Daniel assures us, Daniel 5.

The consternation which seized the king on the night of Babylon's assault is read in the graphic words of Daniel 5:6, "**his knees smote one against another.**" "**On that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.**"

Turn to the prediction of Babylon's desolations, Isaiah 13. "**It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation,**" vs. 20. Absolute loss of inhabitants is announced. Cities dwindle and decay; complete solitudes few of them ever become. A village crowns the hill formed by the ruins of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh (Rawlinson); Arab huts are found clinging about the majestic ruins at Karnack and Luxor in Egypt; Tanis, the seat of government of Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression and of his successor, lives in the mud hovels of San; Damascus, almost as old as Babylon; Athens, Rome, ancient likewise, remain to this day; but the great capital of the Chaldean Empire has no inhabitant Strabo, writing in the age of Augustus, could say, "the great city has become a great solitude."

Benjamin of Tudela, writing in the twelfth, and Maundeville in the fourteenth centuries said the same, the latter testifying, "It is alle deserte, and fulle of dragons and grete serpentes." The accounts of modern explorers are similar. "The site of Babylon is a naked and a hideous waste" (Loftus).

**"Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their folds there,"** vs. 20.

On the actual ruins of Babylon the Arabian neither pitches his tent nor pastures his flocks, because the nitrous soil produces no pasture to tempt him (Rawlinson), and because he believes it is the "abode of evil spirits" (Rich).

**“But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, owls, satyrs** (probably jackals; the word means hairy ones), **dragons**” vss. 21, 22. Every one of these particulars is fulfilled to this day, if the jackal is included in the enumeration. Lions, owls, serpents have been seen there, the only inhabitants of the once proud and splendid city. To the very letter has the prediction been accomplished.

2. *The fall of Babylon*, chap. 21.

This prediction differs widely from that of chapter thirteen. We are told that it is the Medo-Persian army that is to capture the Chaldean capital, vs. 2. It is to take place at the time of a feast, vs. 5 (cf. Daniel v). The steady advance of the hostile army with its battalions of horses, battalions of asses, and of camels is seen by the watchman, vs. 7. Herodotus tells us the Persian army had just such adjuncts as are here mentioned. Finally there is the sudden cry of the capture and overthrow, **“Babylon is fallen, is fallen,”** vs. 9; and her chief gods, Bel, Nebo, and Merodach are forever discredited. The absolute accuracy of the prediction is fully attested by the history of Babylon’s fall. It came about as here foretold.

3. *Prediction of Cyrus*, 44:28; 45:1.

His name was given by the prophet, his special service designated, viz., rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple, long before he had existence. Josephus writes, “When, therefore, Cyrus had read this, and marveled at the divinity, a kind of impulse and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was written.” None but the Omniscient could have known the person and the name of him who was to conquer Babylon and deliver the chosen people.

4. *The gates of Babylon to be open for Cyrus’ entrance*, 45:1.

History relates that on the night of the capture this actually occurred. Marching into the heart of the city by the river channel, which he had drained, Cyrus found the gates open, and ingress unobstructed. Thus the accuracy of accomplishment attests the divine character of prophecy.

*Note Isaiah’s denunciation of idols*, 40.

He attacks them with argument, proves them to be mere things, futile, lifeless things. He pours contempt on them, scathes them with irony, blasts them with ridicule, explodes infinite laughter upon them. Nothing can exceed the exquisite sarcasm with which he describes the manufacture of idols, 40:19, 20.

The rich man employs a goldsmith to fashion for him a metal god. A poor man, unable to pay for so costly a divinity, selects a good hard stick of timber on which he sets to work a skilled mechanic; and presto! has, to his unspeakable delight, a wooden god. And then the blazing contrast he draws between these scornful things and the living God who bends the blue dome over our heads and suspends the world on His arm, and feeds the creatures thereof with His hands—how the miserable dumb idols shrivel into nothing in such a Presence.

*Note also the power of prayer.*

Two instances are given: one, in the destruction of the Assyrian army, chap, 37. “One night intervened between a mighty host and nothing,” the fathers used to say.

The other relates to Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery, 38. Yet prayer for prolonged life may be a mistake. The king’s most serious blunder, if not sin, took place after his miraculous restoration to health, 39, cf. II Chronicles 32:24-31. Prolonged life, health, prosperity, may not be the best things for us after all. For prosperity of soul we may always ask; for uninterrupted bodily health, we are incompetent to judge.

**~ end of chapter 24 ~**

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