

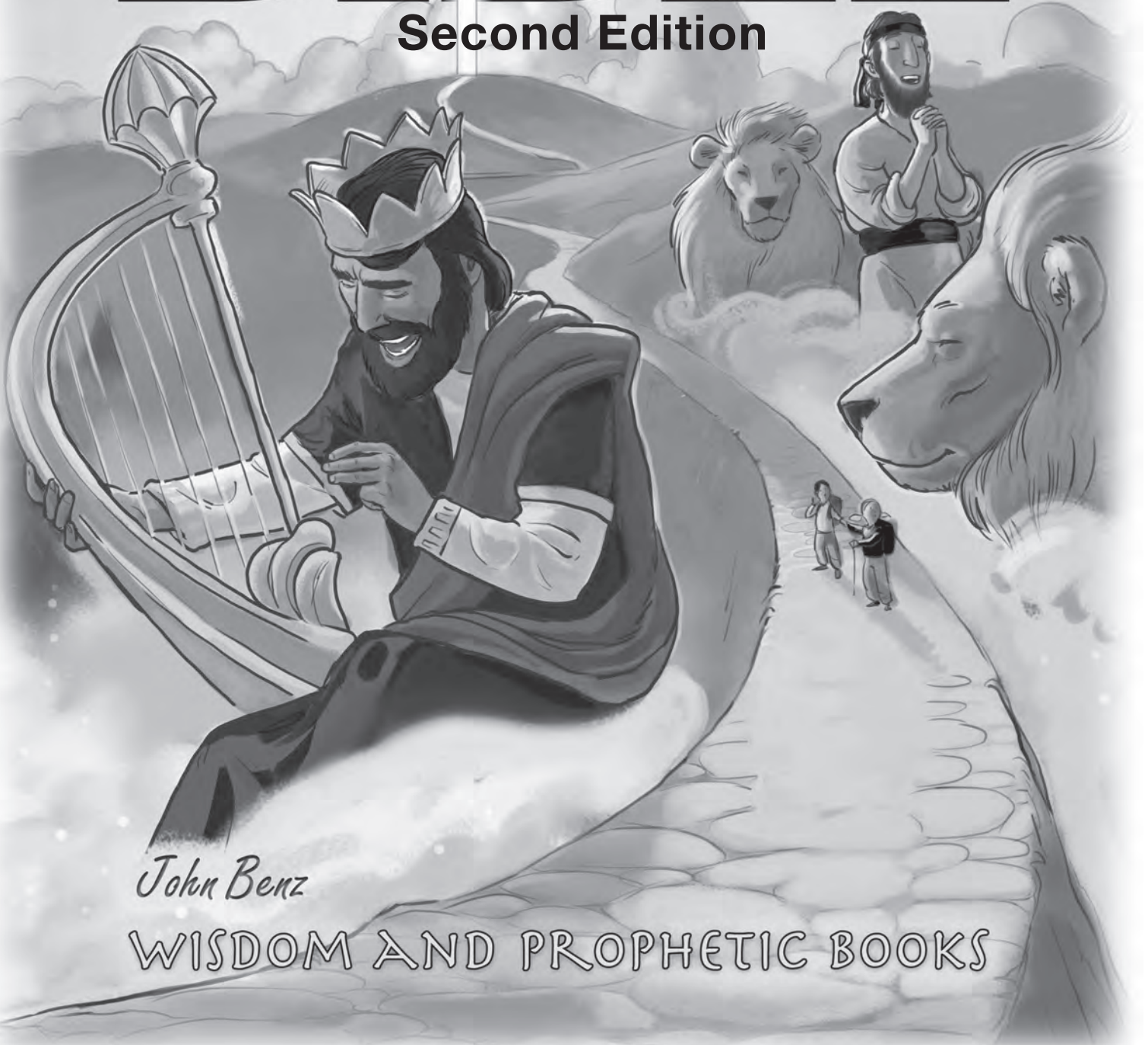
JOURNEY THROUGH THE

BIBLE

BOOK 2

Second Edition

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John Benz

WISDOM AND PROPHETIC BOOKS

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A publication of
Christian Liberty Press
502 West Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004
www.christianlibertypress.com

Written by John Benz
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Copyediting by Diane C. Olson
Cover design by Bob Fine
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ISBN 978-1-629821-75-7 (print)
ISBN 978-1-629821-76-4 (eBook PDF)

Printed in the United States of America

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Introduction

The *Journey Through the Bible* curriculum is designed to have students encounter the biblical text firsthand. Many young children grow up hearing Bible stories in Sunday school or from their parents or even from similar home-schooling curricula. This approach is very valuable for their growth and maturity. The goal of this curriculum is to go beyond the stories of the Bible and to have students read the Bible itself. In fact, this curriculum, along with the *Book 1* and *Book 3* Bible curricula in this series, will take the student through the entire Bible. Within these three years, if a student follows the curriculum, he or she will have read the entire Bible.

For this year, we will look at the wisdom and poetic books of the Old Testament, as well as the prophets, in *Journey Through the Bible Book 2: Wisdom and Prophetic Books*. The translation that we are going to use for this curriculum is the New King James Version. We chose this version because the King James Version of the Bible is the most widely used translation, and the New King James Version of the Bible is easier for children to read. While it is possible to complete this curriculum using other translations of the Bible, the questions in the workbook use the language and phrases of the New King James Version. As a result, it may be difficult at times to find the answers to these questions without using this version.

There are four main elements to this curriculum: the Bible, the *Student Exercises: Journey Through the Bible Book 2* workbook, the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook, and the tests. *First*, the direct reading of the Bible is the most important element of this course; as stated before, students need to encounter the biblical text firsthand. On average, the student will read about four chapters of the Bible per day. *Secondly*, as students read, they are to answer ten questions from the Bible reading in the *Student Exercises* each day. The vast majority of the questions in the workbook can be answered just using the text itself, but there are a few questions that require using outside sources, such as a dictionary. Many of these questions are designed to bring out some of the important points in the biblical text. The workbook is divided into four units, each covering forty days of reading. On the top right-hand side of each workbook page is the reading that the student should do for that day. A separate answer key for the workbook questions is available through Christian Liberty Press.

The *third* element to this curriculum is the *Journey Through the Bible Book 2* textbook. The lessons in this textbook are designed to help students understand what they are reading. This is not designed to be a theology book that teaches a particular view of theology; rather, it is a lesson book designed to bring clarity to the reading that the students are doing. As the student reads through a lesson each day, there are three questions from this textbook that will show up in the *Student Exercises* workbook. This is designed to hold students accountable to read through the textbook. There are forty lessons per quarter that correspond to the forty days per quarter in the workbook. The lesson will not always directly correspond to the specific reading for that particular day. Because this is designed to be a survey course, we cannot go into detail on every chapter of the Bible. Rather, this curriculum will highlight particular chapters or themes that run throughout the books. For the book of Psalms, the lessons in this book will analyze a number of particular psalms. Before reading a particular lesson, the student should read the Bible passage given at the beginning of that lesson, even if the student has read the passage before in the daily readings. One of the goals of this curriculum is to help the students learn how to analyze Scripture for themselves; therefore, for those chapters that are not covered in the lesson book, the students will have to analyze them on their own.

Fourthly, for each unit, the student will have two tests based on the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook and the questions in the *Student Exercises* workbook. In other words, there will be one test for every twenty lessons in the course. These tests are available through Christian Liberty Press.

There are a couple of features within the *Journey Through the Bible Book 2* textbook that are worth noting. *First*, occasionally there will be some vocabulary words that are printed in **bold type**. These are words that may either be significant or may just be words that are not commonly used in everyday speech. Often these words will appear in the questions from the lesson in the *Student Exercises* workbook. The *second* feature of the textbook is the Thought Question(s) at the end of many of the lessons. These questions are designed to help the student think about the reading in a more critical manner. Some of these questions are designed to bring out the theology of the passage, some are designed to encourage students to think more deeply about what is actually happening in the passage, and some are designed to help the student think about applying the passage to his or her life.

John Benz

Note to Parents:

In Deuteronomy 6:5–7, it says: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Scripture makes it clear that the primary responsibility for teaching children lies with the parents, particularly the fathers. This curriculum will be most effective if parents discuss the reading and lesson with the students after they do the work. The thought questions at the end of most lessons provide an excellent opportunity for discussion between parents and their students. In addition, parents are encouraged to use the daily readings for family devotionals. Although these questions are not included with the curriculum, here are some questions that can be asked after every lesson:

1. What is something that this passage teaches you about God?
2. What is something you can pray for as a result of this passage?
3. What is one question you have from this passage?

When you discuss the passage with your students, they will be far more likely to think about the passage and how to apply it to their lives.

UNIT 3: Isaiah & Jeremiah

Introduction to Prophetic Literature

Lesson 81

Usually, when someone mentions the word *prophet*, that person has a tendency to think of people who can predict the future. After all, what is a prophecy but a prediction of things to come? Many people love to read the prophets and find these books to be the most interesting and exciting of the books of the Bible. However, the prophets can also be the most difficult section of Scripture to understand. Rather than saying something directly, there are many sections of the prophets that are cryptic and poetic, requiring one to study the passage in depth in order to understand it.

It is actually inappropriate to think of prophets as primarily dealing with the future. Most of the material in the prophets looks backwards at the Law and how the Israelites are breaking the Law, rather than forward at what will happen in the future. Though there is a lot of variety in the messages of the prophets, the overarching message of all of the prophets is that the people need to repent of their sins. God raises up the prophets in order to warn the people to return to the Lord and to follow His Law. The main job of the prophets is to serve as God's mouthpiece to the Israelites. When God has something to say to the Israelites, He will put a message into the hearts and mouths of His prophets. As Jeremiah will later describe it, it is as though the word of God burns in his heart so that he has to share it with others.

Activity of the Writing Prophets during the Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Timeline	King of Judah // Event	Prophet to Judah		Prophet to Israel		King of Israel // Event
780 B.C.						Jeroboam II (781–753)
770						
760	Uzziah (Azariah) (767–740)			(c. 760) Amos	(c. 760) Jonah	
					(c. 755) Hosea	
						Zechariah (753–752)
750	Jotham (750–735)	Micah (c. 742)	Isaiah (c. 740)			Shallum (752)
740	Ahaz (735–715)					Menahem (752–742)
730						Pekahiah (742–740)
720						Pekah (740–732)
710	Hezekiah (715–686)					Hoshea (732–722)
700						Fall of Samaria (722)
680	Manasseh (686–642)					
660	Amon (642–640)					
640	Josiah (640–609)					
620						
600	Jehoahaz (609)					
	Jehoiakim (609–597)					
	Jehoiachin (597)					
	Zedekiah (597–586)					
	Fall of Jerusalem (586)					
580						
560						
540						
520	1st return of exiles (538)					
	Temple rebuilt (516/515)					
500						
480						
460	2nd return of exiles (458)					
440	3rd return of exiles (445)					

Major prophets

Minor prophets

Joel is not displayed, as the dates are uncertain and estimates range from the 9th to the 4th centuries B.C.

Micah's prophecy was likely directed toward both Judah and Israel.

There are two statements that appear regularly in the prophets that immediately clue us in to the fact that we are reading a prophecy. The first is “Thus says the LORD,” and the second is “The word of the LORD came to me.” Both of these statements show us that God has spoken to the prophets. And God uses a variety of means to communicate His Word to the prophets. Some prophets hear direct words from God, as Moses does on Mount Sinai. Moses writes down these words in the Book of the Law. God speaks to some prophets through dreams, through animals (Balaam), and through an inclination in their hearts. Sometimes, the message is just within them, and as they speak, God directs their words. It appears that God gives these prophets His own authority so that the things they say come to pass. For example, Elisha calls down a curse on the servants at Bethel in 2 Kings 2, and God honors this curse by sending a she-bear to tear up the servants.

When studying the prophets, it is important to first look for what that prophecy means at the time that it is written. Later in this class, we are going to examine the prophecy in Isaiah 7 regarding the virgin birth. This prophecy is quoted in the New Testament as fulfilled through Jesus Christ, and rightfully so. But this prophecy also has an immediate importance for the Israelites during Isaiah’s time. There are some prophecies that have no immediate fulfillment, but are entirely about the future. But we must first seek to understand these prophecies in their context to see what they meant for the original listeners.

There are some common themes that consistently show up in many of the prophets. As mentioned earlier, one of the themes is the need to repent and return to the Lord. Even when prophets prophesy doom, there is always room for repentance so that God would relent from the destruction, as He does with Nineveh when Jonah preaches there. A second theme that shows up regularly in the prophets is the concept of the **remnant**. God predicts that He will destroy His people, but there will be a remnant of them that will endure, and He will rebuild Israel through that remnant. A third theme is the Day of the Lord. This is a future day to which almost all of the prophets look, wherein God’s enemies will be destroyed and God’s people will be saved. There are many other themes, but we will address these themes as we study the prophets.

remnant: remaining; a small group of people that remain after destruction

Introduction to Isaiah

Lesson 82

One of the first questions that we must answer for each prophet, in order to understand him, is the question of background. We need to know what is going on in the world and what is going on in Israel so that we can understand the messages of the prophets. In the case of Isaiah, we learn in chapter 1 that he does his ministry during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This takes place during the period of time known as the Assyrian era of Israel’s history, called such because Assyria is the major threat to Israel at this time. Following the reigns of David and Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel is split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. For over 100 years, these two nations fight against each other. At one point, during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the worship of Yahweh is almost wiped out from both kingdoms, but God raises up Elijah and Elisha to purge Israel of its wicked leadership. Following this purge, Israel enters into a time of prosperity. This prosperity reaches its peak under the leadership of Uzziah. We learn in Isaiah 6 that Isaiah begins his ministry in the year that King Uzziah dies.

Note: It is recommend that you refer to the chart on page 75 before reading about each prophet to understand the historical context.

The reign of Uzziah ends around the year 740 B.C. The reign of Hezekiah ends around the year 686 B.C. We know that Isaiah’s ministry begins in 740 B.C. then and is completed some time before 686 B.C. It is possible, therefore, that Isaiah prophesies for over fifty years. The book of Isaiah is the first of the **Major Prophets**.

Because the book of Isaiah is so long, there is not just one simple message to the book. But if one wanted to try to sum up the message of Isaiah, it is that God is the Holy King of Israel and that Israel needs to worship Him rather than idols. First, the theme of **holiness** shows up over and over in this book. In the famous scene in Isaiah 6 in which Isaiah sees the Lord, he sees the seraphim (angels) cry out to one another “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts...” In this same chapter, we see God portrayed as the real King over Israel. In the year that King Uzziah dies, Isaiah sees the Lord on the throne. It is clear throughout this book that God is the One in control. Also, throughout this book there is a call to return to the Lord and abandon the idols that the Israelites had been worshipping. Finally, the book

of Isaiah contains many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

One of the unique features of the book of Isaiah is the section known as the Servant Songs. Chapters 40–53 are called the Servant Songs because they speak about the Servant of the Lord. When we get to this section, we will go into more details about the Servant of the Lord. But the most famous of these chapters is Isaiah 53. This chapter is the clearest chapter in the Old Testament that deals with the idea of a suffering Messiah. In most other places in the Old Testament, the Messiah is a conquering King who destroys His enemies. But in Isaiah 53, we see another side of the Messiah. Here we learn that the Servant of the Lord will suffer and die, bearing the sins of the people. This will be fulfilled perfectly as Jesus dies on the cross for our sins.

For the sake of this textbook, we are not going to comment in depth on every chapter of Isaiah; rather, we are going to highlight particular chapters or sections within this book.

Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some consider Daniel; called such because of the long length of the books and the long length of time that they minister

holiness: to be different or set apart for special use; to be morally pure and perfect

Messiah: the Anointed One; a future leader from the line of David, who will save Israel

Isaiah 1

Lesson 83

Right from the beginning of the book of Isaiah, we are given the problem with Israel. Even though the Israelites were doing their religious festivals, the rest of their lives were filled with wickedness. We learn in verse 2 that the people are rebelling against God. What is worse, the people do not even take the time to think about their rebellion. Israel is called a “sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters!”

God then compares Israel to an ailing body: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it...” Because of their rebellion and sin, God raises up enemies that have begun to attack and destroy Israel. At the point that Isaiah writes this, many of the cities of Israel have been burned and foreigners have invaded Israel. As we will see in chapter 7, the Southern

Kingdom of Judah is in a bad situation at the beginning of this book. Not only is Assyria threatening to conquer the entire Middle East, but the king of Damascus and the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are also threatening to attack Judah. Judah is surrounded and is in danger of being destroyed. In light of this, Isaiah compares Judah to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which had been completely destroyed. But this is the first time that the remnant theme shows up as God promises to preserve a remnant of Judah.

The Israelites believe that as long as they continue to fulfill their religious duties, God is okay with their rebellion and sin. This is where another theme appears that will show up multiple times in the prophets: God cares more about obedience than He does religious duties. Rather than their festivals and sacrifices being something that is pleasing to God, it is something that God bears or endures.

So in verses 16 and 17, God tells Israel what He wants from them. He wants them to stop doing evil and to “learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” God cares about justice and mercy more than He cares about their religious duties. And if the Israelites repent and turn from their ways, God will forgive them. Like a parent who attempts to get a teenager to stop rebelling, God reasons with Israel in verse 18. God gives the people two options: they can continue in their rebellion and be “devoured by the sword,” or they can turn and be forgiven. God represents forgiveness with the use of color. He says, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Scarlet is often symbolic of sin, whereas white is often symbolic of purity. Even though their garments are metaphorically stained red with their sins, God is going to wash them and clean them so that their garments will be white again.

Once again, in verse 21 God describes the sin and rebellion of the Israelites. The leaders of Israel have become corrupt and have corrupted justice. Leaders who are supposed to protect the poor and the needy are accepting bribes from the rich and have perverted justice. As a result, the poor continue to get poorer and are oppressed and abused by the rich, while the leaders of Israel sit by and watch it happen. So God promises to judge Israel. God will “rid Myself of My adversaries, and take vengeance on My enemies.” God is going to purge Israel of its wickedness so that once again Jerusalem will be called “the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” Justice and righteousness will once again be found in Israel.

When God makes reference to the terebinth trees and gardens in verse 29, He is referring to the idolatry of the Israelites. They have been desiring and pursuing their idols, but they will soon be ashamed of their idols. This is yet another theme that will show up again in Isaiah and throughout all of the prophets. Judgment is coming on Israel, and Isaiah warns the people to be ready for it and to repent before it comes.

Isaiah 4–5

Lesson 84

Following his initial prophecy in Isaiah 1, Isaiah continues to warn the people about their sins and the consequences of those sins in Isaiah 2-3. While the immediate future looks bleak for Israel as destruction is coming, there will come a day when Israel will once again stand as a beacon of righteousness to the world. Isaiah 4 continues this theme of destruction and refinement through that destruction.

In Isaiah 4, another theme appears that will reappear multiple times in Isaiah and later in the books of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah. This theme is the concept of the “branch.” Israel is compared to a tree that God is going to cut down because of their wickedness. There will be almost nothing left, but out of that destruction will come a branch. Out of that branch, God will rebuild the “tree” of Israel. Interestingly, it is common in Israel for olive trees to grow within the trunks of other dead trees. This branch is the same idea as the remnant from the first chapter of Isaiah. God is going to punish the Israelites and almost completely destroy them, but He will preserve a few people and rebuild Israel through them. However, when these people rebuild Israel, it will no longer be an evil nation, but a nation characterized by righteousness.

This prophecy will have three fulfillments. First, during the reign of Hezekiah, Assyria will bring its army and destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It looks as though Assyria is also going to completely destroy the Southern Kingdom of Judah, as Jerusalem remains helpless against the much greater Assyrian army. But out of that certain death, God miraculously delivers Judah and they survive. This is a partial fulfillment of this prophecy, as Israel does not stand as a beacon of righteousness after this time. The greater fulfillment of this prophecy takes place 150 years later when Babylon destroys Jerusalem. In the year 586 B.C., the Babylonians completely conquer Israel and burn the temple and Jerusalem to the ground. Only 10,000 people remain alive from among the Israelites, compared to

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

In Matthew 2:23, we are told that Jesus growing up in Nazareth fulfills prophecy. The problem with this is that there is no specific prophecy that says that Jesus will grow up in Nazareth. However, the Hebrew word *Nezer* is what Isaiah uses here, which is translated as “branch” in English. Jesus is the true *Nezer*, or “branch,” from which God restores His people. Nazareth is another form of *nezer*, or “branch.”

the over two million Israelites that had left Egypt centuries before. Israel is almost completely wiped out, but these 10,000 people serve as the branch, or remnant, through which God will rebuild Israel. But once again this is only a partial fulfillment, as Israel is still not a beacon of righteousness to the world. The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy comes through Jesus Christ, who is killed, but out of His death He rises again, bringing righteousness to the world.

In Isaiah 5, there is another theme that appears multiple times throughout the Bible. In this chapter, Israel is compared to a vineyard. In this metaphor, God has prepared Israel to be His vineyard. He has taken care of His vineyard and given it the best possible environment for it to yield fruit. God had taken the Israelites out of Egypt and miraculously brought them into the Promised Land. God had given the Israelites His Law and had given them prophets and leaders who would direct them how they should live. And God expects His vineyard to yield good fruit. So also, God expects His people to be a light to the world, to represent Him to

THE SON OF THE VINEYARD OWNER

Isaiah refers to Israel as God’s vineyard, which has been unfaithful and has not yielded the appropriate fruit. Jesus picks up on this theme with His Parable of the Vineyard. In Jesus’ parable, God is the vineyard owner who commissions the workers (religious leaders in Jesus’ day) to take care of the vineyard (God’s people). However, the workers are wicked and refuse to give the fruit to the servants (prophets) that God sends. Finally, Jesus adds that the vineyard owner would send His own son to collect the fruit, but the workers beat and kill the son. Jesus, of course, is that Son of the Vineyard owner whom the religious leaders kill.

the nations around them. They are supposed to yield the fruit of righteousness. But instead of righteousness there is oppression and injustice. They are supposed to be yielding “good grapes,” but instead they bring forth “wild grapes.” So because the people are not yielding good fruit, God is going to remove the blessings that He had given them, and they will suffer. Later, Jesus compares Israel to a vineyard; here, He calls down judgment on the spiritual leaders for not yielding fruit (Matthew 21:33–46). Consequently, the kingdom of God would be taken from Israel and given to another nation that would bear fruit (verse 43).

At the end of chapter 5, Isaiah reveals how God is going to punish Israel. “He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth.” God is going to raise up a nation from afar that is going to wage war against Israel. In the next few chapters, we learn which nation that will be.

Isaiah 6

Lesson 85

If we were to direct a person to the good news of Jesus Christ, we would probably recommend that he read one of the gospels in the New Testament. After all, where could we learn about the work of Jesus better than in the direct stories about Him? But there are a few passages in the Old Testament where we are given clear pictures of the work of Jesus before He even comes to the earth. Isaiah 6 is one of those Old Testament places where the work of Jesus is clearly seen, even before He comes.

In this chapter, Isaiah receives his commission to be a prophet. This all takes place in the year that King Uzziah dies. This commission is given through a vision as Isaiah is brought into the very throne room of God. As the Israelites mourn the death of their king, Isaiah sees a vision of the true King of Israel, God, seated on His throne. This vision takes Isaiah to the temple where he sees the train of God’s robe fill the temple. The temple, particularly the Most Holy Place, is God’s throne room on earth.

In this temple throne room, Isaiah sees two “fiery” seraph angels. These are majestic creatures, each with six wings. And these angels are seen worshiping God, crying out to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” When something is repeated in Scripture, it is important; when something is mentioned three times, it is incredibly important. God is holy, or pure. As Isaiah observes these creatures

praising God, God Himself speaks and the doorposts of the temple shake. And, as in the Exodus, smoke fills the temple as the glory of the Lord resides there.

After encountering the holy God, Isaiah is ruined. His response to all of this is to cry out, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” After being in the presence of complete perfection and purity, Isaiah is unraveled. The only thing that Isaiah can do is call down curses upon himself. When a prophet says “woe,” he is literally calling down curses and destruction upon the nation or person he woes. In the presence of absolute purity and perfection, Isaiah is intimately aware of his own sin. One of the reasons so many people in this world do not realize their need for forgiveness is that they compare themselves to the worst of people. We all seem like righteous and good people when we compare ourselves to Hitler, or murderers and thieves; but compared to God Himself we are all wretched sinners. Perhaps there was no one else in history so intimately aware of his sin than Isaiah was here.

It is as Isaiah is lamenting his own sin and calling down curses upon himself that something unexpected happens. God has one of the seraph angels grab a burning coal from the altar and touch Isaiah’s lips. Then God declares to Isaiah, “your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.” God forgives Isaiah of all of his sins. One could only imagine the incredible burden that is released from Isaiah as he goes from complete awareness of his sin to being completely clean and forgiven! Then God says, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Without hesitation, Isaiah offers himself. After the forgiveness that he had just experienced, he would do anything that God would ask. So he says to God, “Here am I! Send me.”

So how is this the Gospel? This story begins with a man encountering the holy, living God. In the presence of God, he is made intimately aware of his sin and he acknowledges his sin. God offers complete forgiveness and then sends out this man to do His work. This is exactly what happens through Jesus Christ. As we encounter God, we become aware of our sin. Through Jesus we are offered forgiveness. And then Jesus says, “Follow Me,” and sends us out to do His work. God has always saved His people the same way.



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Syria and Israel Attack Judah

c. 740–732 B.C.

As the Assyrian Empire expanded westward, Syria and Israel sought to compel Judah and the other nearby states to form an anti-Assyrian alliance. Judah refused, leading Syria and Israel to attack Jerusalem. Syria also wrested Elath from Judah and gave it to the Edomites. The Edomites may have also raided Judah and taken captives at this time (see 2 Chronicles 28:17). The Philistines, who may have been part of the anti-Assyrian alliance, attacked Judah as well, capturing several cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb (see 2 Chronicles 28:18).

called Immanuel, “God with us.” Of course, we know that Jesus fulfills this prophecy when He is born of the virgin Mary. But what many people do not know is that this prophecy has an immediate fulfillment during the lifetime of Isaiah.

In order to understand this prophecy, it is necessary to first understand the context in which this prophecy is given. In the beginning of chapter 7, God sends the prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz of Judah. At this time, the kingdom of Judah is being threatened by three different countries: Syria (Damascus), Israel (Northern Kingdom), and Assyria. The kings of Israel and Damascus had made an alliance and were planning on staging a combined attack against Judah. In order to protect his kingdom from this attack, Ahaz is planning on making an alliance with Assyria. God sends Isaiah to Ahaz in order to warn him not to make this alliance with Assyria.

After promising Ahaz that he does not have to fear these two nations, God tells Ahaz to “ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God.” God wants Ahaz to be like Gideon, who tested God and responded with obedience when God proved Himself to him. But Ahaz does not want to trust God; he does not want God to prove Himself

to him. So Ahaz responds by saying, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!” Ahaz refuses to trust God; he has made up his mind to put his trust in the king of Assyria. It is in light of this refusal to ask God for a sign that the prophecy of the virgin birth comes forth.

Isaiah 7–8

Lesson 86

One of the most famous prophecies about Jesus comes from Isaiah 7. Here we are given the prophecy that the Messiah will be born of a virgin and will be

THE IMMANUEL CHILD

One of the most famous prophecies about Jesus comes in Isaiah 7, wherein we learn that He is to be born of a virgin. While there is no indication that the child born in Isaiah 8 was miraculously born, Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary. In addition, the name Immanuel means “God with us”. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of this, as He is the very presence of God among men.

In verse 14, Isaiah replies to Ahaz by saying: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” So we see that this child that is to be born is to be a sign to Ahaz. But how can Jesus, who is born over 700 years later, be a sign to Ahaz? And this child is a sign of what? The very next verses in Isaiah 7 answer these questions. This child is to be an age marker: “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.” In other words, before this child knows how to determine right from wrong, the nations of Syria and Israel will be conquered. And we learn in verse 17 that these nations will be conquered by Assyria. Consequently, this Immanuel child must have been born within the lifetime of Ahaz; and before he was old enough to know right from wrong, the Assyrians would come and conquer Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

So who was this first Immanuel child? The answer comes in the very next chapter. In chapter 8, we learn that Isaiah had gone to a prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son. However, this son is not directly named Immanuel, but rather Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Yet, if we look at the prophecy concerning this child, we see that this prophecy is the same as the Immanuel prophecy. We see in Isaiah 8:4 that “before the child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.” This child from Isaiah 8 is also an age marker, showing Ahaz how long it will be before Assyria attacks Syria (Damascus) and Israel (Samaria). Interestingly, the word “Immanuel” appears two times in Isaiah 8: in verse 8 and in verse 10 (“God is with us”).

At the time that Isaiah gives the prophecy in chapter 7, the prophetess is still a virgin; but when he goes to her in chapter 8, she is no longer a virgin. This Immanuel prophecy is first fulfilled in chapter 8. This provides us with a context for understanding prophecy. There are

many prophecies in Scripture that have multiple fulfillments. This is fulfilled partially in Isaiah’s day, but fully through the life of Christ. Many of the prophecies work this way in Scripture, with an immediate fulfillment and a greater future fulfillment through Jesus.

Isaiah 9

Lesson 87

Another famous prophecy about the Messiah comes in chapter 9. But unlike the Immanuel prophecy from chapter 7, this prophecy appears to have only one fulfillment, and that through Jesus.

There are two themes that appear throughout the book of Isaiah: destruction and restoration. Over and over in this book, Isaiah prophesies that God is going to let Israel be destroyed, but He will preserve a remnant through that destruction and restore Israel afterwards. These themes appear again at the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9. Chapter 8 ends with a prophecy of doom and destruction upon Israel because of the Israelites’ wickedness. But the very first words of chapter 9 mention hope for restoration: “Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed... The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” There will be gloom, but where there was once darkness, there will be light.

In this prophecy, it is predicted that a “light” will come from the region of Galilee in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. This is the northernmost part of Israel that, at the time of this prophecy, is part of the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah has just predicted that the king of Assyria is going to destroy the Northern Kingdom, yet out of the ashes of the Northern Kingdom God is going to bring a “light.”

For the second time in the book of Isaiah, there is a prophecy about a child that is to come. But this child is more than a time-marker to Ahaz; we are given more information about what this child will do. This is the prophecy that Isaiah gives in verses 6–7:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.