

## CHAPTER 16, THE BEGINNING OF THE END

**TIMELESS TRUTH: GOD DEALS WITH DISOBEDIENCE, BUT HIS COMPASSION NEVER ENDS.**

**CHAPTER SUMMARY** (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

For 209 years, the northern kingdom of Israel had endured one evil king after another. Their failure to keep God's covenant meant they would be expelled from the covenant. They had been chosen to be a blessing to all other nations, but now they would be delivered over to those very nations.

Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, set up a puppet government for the northern tribes of Israel and appointed Hoshea as king. Hoshea was as defiant of Shalmaneser as he was of God, the true King of Israel. He stopped paying tribute and as a result, the Assyrian army destroyed the capital city of Samaria and captured Hoshea. The king, along with many of his fellow Israelites, was deported by Shalmaneser's successor, Sargon II. By resettling them throughout Assyria, God was settling His own accounts. Idolatry, disobedience, and stubbornness provoked God's anger and led Him to expel the northern kingdom from His land.

Meanwhile, just to the south in the kingdom of Judah, godly King Hezekiah was nervously watching these world-shaking events on his northern border. Hezekiah stands out from all of the other kings of Judah for his efforts to remove every vestige of idolatry in the land. He rebelled against the new Assyrian king Sennacherib. The Assyrians sent envoys, claiming that they wanted to negotiate a peaceful surrender with Hezekiah in Jerusalem. Their reasoning was faultless: What other nation had been able to stand against the Assyrian might? Had not God Himself commissioned them for this task? Sennacherib's commander appealed directly to the populace of Jerusalem, speaking to them in Hebrew.

King Hezekiah trusted in the LORD and prayed for deliverance. The prophet Isaiah promised that God would deliver them. What faith it must have taken to trust the prophet's prediction! The angel of the LORD swept through the Assyrians army as they slept. The next morning Sennacherib's camp was littered with 185,000 dead Assyrian soldiers. The army retreated and Judah was saved.

Isaiah had been called to be a prophet during the last year of King Uzziah's life. In a majestic vision of the LORD, he was commissioned to speak for God to turn the people of Judah away from sin and toward their God. He warned that Judah was walking in her sister Israel's footsteps and therefore would reap similar judgment. Unfortunately, he seldom found a listening audience.

The threat of foreign exile failed to curb the widespread social injustice, moral decay, and religious apostasy. Judah's pride would be her downfall; God loved His people too much to allow their sin to go unchecked. And although He warned of judgment, He also promised a future restoration. When Israel perceived herself as forsaken and forgotten, her compassionate God would fully restore her. The whole world would know that the LORD is their Savior and Redeemer.

What a comfort Isaiah's prophecies must have been to the faithful remnant of Judah: God's Upper Story of redemption would triumph over the sin of His people. Even the godliest of kings could not overcome the sin nature of mankind. In his most memorable passage, Isaiah described a Suffering Servant, who was "pierced for our transgressions." Looking down from the Upper Story, we can see that this was a description of the true King, who would suffer for all mankind.

## I. Israel's and Judah's Problem

- A. Isaiah began his ministry in the year the King Uzziah died (739 BC) and it extended through Hezekiah's reign, which would make it at least 53 years. Scripture doesn't record Isaiah's death, but according to Jewish history, Isaiah was sawn in half by King Manasseh (son of Hezekiah), a fact that is alluded to in Hebrews 11:37.
- B. Isaiah was probably a cousin to King Uzziah, which would help explain why he was so familiar with the royal court in Jerusalem and had so much influence on the various kings.
- C. Isaiah 1 graphically describes the state of Judah that compelled God to speak through this prophet.
  1. Isaiah 1:2-9 *Rebellion against YHWH*, the Holy One of Israel. "Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him" (Isaiah 1:4).
  2. Isaiah 1:10-20 *Empty religion*. "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, ...I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly" (Isaiah 1:13).
  3. Isaiah 1:21-31 *Social injustice*. "Your rulers are rebels, and companions of thieves; everyone loves a bribe and chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, nor does the widow's plea come before them" (Isaiah 1:23).
    - a. Notice the natural progression. Rebellion against God will inevitably lead to empty worship. One cannot fool God. It is an abomination to Him to worship with insincerity, to go through the motions when one's heart is filled with rebellion.
    - b. Naturally, the social structure disintegrates into chaos. Self-centered people will oppress and mistreat others; only God-centered people will seek true justice.

## II. Isaiah's Point

- A. God intended Israel to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1-3). They were to be His "servant" on earth, a people through whom He would work to redeem all nations. But they never met His expectations.
- B. **You need a Savior!** You, Judah, are sick with sin and desperate for cleansing. Isaiah began to paint a picture of the "ideal servant" that soon narrowed it down to a single individual who would die on behalf of all others. If the nation would not serve the LORD, then this Servant would.

## III. Isaiah's Prophecy of the Death, Burial and Resurrection of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah (p. 228-230, Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

- A. Isaiah has sometimes been called the "Fifth Gospel" or the "Gospel of the Old Testament" because it has so much to say about the Messiah.
- B. This is the pinnacle of Messianic passages in Isaiah. Some have identified the Servant as Israel herself (she was to be a servant of God), but the contrast in 52:14 between *you* (Israel) and *Him* makes it clear that they cannot be one and the same. The *Him* must be the Messiah.

Prophecy	Fulfillment
Isaiah 52:13	Acts 3:13
Isaiah 52:15	Romans 15:20-21
Isaiah 53:1	John 12:37-38, Romans 10:16
Isaiah 53:3	Mark 9:12
Isaiah 53:4	Matthew 8:16-17
Isaiah 53:4-5	Matthew 26:67, 1 Peter 2:24, John 1:29
Isaiah 53:6	1 Peter 2:25
Isaiah 53:7-8	Acts 8:32-33, Matthew 26:63, Matthew 27:12-14
Isaiah 53:9	1 Peter 2:22-23
Isaiah 53:10a	John 18:11
Isaiah 53:11	
Isaiah 53:12b	Romans 5:19
Isaiah 53:12c	Luke 22:37, 23:33
	Luke 23:34, Hebrews 9:28

#### IV. Applications and Implications

- A. The predictive prophecies of Isaiah strengthen my faith in an all-knowing God.
- B. Isaiah described the Messiah so clearly that the people of Israel and the whole world could recognize Jesus as the One. The prophecies fulfilled by Jesus remind me that no one else could be the Messiah. Therefore, I should learn to trust Him more.
- C. The accuracy of Isaiah 53 is another excellent proof that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.
- D. These Messianic prophecies, written 700+ years before Christ, could be used to show others that the Bible is true and that Jesus alone saves.
- E. Christ who was sinless paid a horrific price for my sin.
- F. The saving work of Messiah was God's plan all along to reconcile helpless, rebellious sinners to Him.
- G. He alone is worthy of honor, worship, and praise.
- H. Because of the work of the Messiah, believers do not need to fear condemnation before God.
- I. I will not be like Judah. I will not be rebellious; I will not worship insincerely, praying to God with sin-stained hands; I will seek and uphold justice for the poor, oppressed and weak among us.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did God send the northern kingdom into captivity? (See 2 Kings 17:7-17 for more details.) Compare God's actions against Israel to Moses' warning in Deut. 28:45-50 and 30:1-5. What do you discover?
2. God frequently reminded Israel of examples of his faithfulness, such as their deliverance from Egypt (p. 219). What past experiences have you had that remind you of God's faithfulness? (See Romans 8:31)
3. How have you seen people respond when they receive just consequences for sinful actions? How should a Christian respond to the consequences of sin and the discipline of God?
4. King Sennacherib of Assyria sent his envoy to Jerusalem to persuade King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to surrender peacefully, claiming he came on the LORD's orders (p. 221). Isaiah's message to Hezekiah said otherwise. How do you evaluate people who claim to have a word from the LORD?
5. What is King Hezekiah's view of YHWH the God of Israel (p. 223)? What is the result of a correct understanding of God?
6. What about the vision of God in the temple made Isaiah realize that he was a sinner? Compare Isaiah's response with Peter in Luke 5:8 and John in Rev. 1:17. What are the implications?
7. According to Isaiah's prophecy (p. 225-226), what was the southern kingdom of Judah like? What did he say that God would do as a result?
8. Isaiah's prophecy predicted punishment and captivity for Judah, as well as return and restoration (p. 227-228). How did Zion (Jerusalem and Judah) react to this message?
9. List the qualities of the Suffering Servant (p. 228-230). (See Matthew 8:16-17,

**26:63-67; 1 Peter 2:22-25; Romans 5:19; Luke 22:37 for further insights.)**