

ISAIAH - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
- b. Why did He record it for our study?

1. Who was Isaiah? What was new, outstanding, or especially emphasized in the book of Isaiah? Does reading Isaiah through one more time improve our picture of God? What were the major events of the time that precipitated the prophecies in the book? Why do you think Isaiah is called the "gospel" prophet? Why do some people think that several authors contributed to the book of Isaiah? What are the arguments for both sides? What messages did Isaiah have for the people of his time?
2. As we begin to look at the prophets of the Bible, most of them seemed to work mainly for Judah. Doesn't God seem partial?
3. Why would God say He is disgusted and tired of their religious festivals and sacrifices when He Himself had given them? (Isaiah 1:14-20; Jeremiah 7:21-23; Amos 5:25) Or did He? They were religious, but what kind of religion was it?
4. Do "inspired" writers ever indulge in plagiarism?
Compare Isaiah 2:2-4 with Micah 4:2,3.
Compare Isaiah 36:1 with 2 Kings 18:13.
Compare Isaiah 37 with 2 Kings 19.
Ninety percent of Mark is copied in either Matthew or Luke.
Most of Jude is in 2 Peter.
5. Isaiah 5:1-7 gives a magnificent description of a vineyard (compare Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). But something went wrong. What was it? Isaiah 5:12,13 says there was a lack of "knowledge." What knowledge was it they lacked? (Compare Hosea 4:1,2,6) Does Isaiah 1:3 actually suggest that the ox and ass know what they are supposed to know, but "my people do not know"? Later when things are right again in Isaiah 11:9 (compare Habakkuk 2:14) it says "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Is this the essential knowledge? What is suggested by Isaiah 29:13 as to the kind of worship that God wants? (compare Matthew 15:7-9 and Romans 12:1-2) Does the quality of our worship reveal the kind of Person we believe our God to be? If God is the extremely intelligent Being described in Isaiah 40:10-31, how do you approach a God like that?
6. Isaiah had a tremendous vision of God in His glory and a contrasting vision of Satan and his goals (Isaiah 6:1-8; 14:4-15). Who else saw this contrast? See Ezekiel 1, 28:1-19; Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest and Satan accusing him (Zechariah 3:1-5); Moses, the author of Job, saw something similar (Job 1, 2, 38-42); John in the Revelation (1, 12-14). What do these prophets, who saw both God and Satan, teach us about the issues that face us? What was Lucifer's original position? What has he been primarily trying to accomplish since the very beginning of his rebellion (see Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:8-9; Revelation 13:5-8)?
7. Who is the baby referred to in Isaiah 7:14? Look at the context of this verse in Isaiah 7:1,10-16; 8:1-3. But who is the baby referred to in Isaiah 9:6? Do we have two virgin births in the Bible? How could Matthew explicitly say that Mary's giving birth was to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? Have we lost our best Messianic prophecy? Or could this prophecy have two different fulfillments? There are other places where Isaiah and others begin by describing a local individual and then expanding their prophecy to someone much greater. Does Isaiah 14:4-15 describe the King of Babylon or Lucifer? Does Ezekiel 28:2-19 describe the Prince of Tyre or Lucifer?
8. Is it apparent from this book how God feels about a people who would rather go to diviners and soothsayers, consulting the "dead" on behalf of the living, than come to Him? What does God do

with such people? (Isaiah 8:11-9:7)

9. Compare Isaiah 11:6-7 and 65:25 with Isaiah 35:9. Will there be any lions in the New Earth or not? How do we explain these apparent “direct contradictions?”
10. Do you believe “Israel’s sins will be forgiven only when the stones of pagan altars are ground up like chalk, and no more symbols of the goddess Asherah or incense altars are left” (Isaiah 27:9, GNB)?
11. What is the meaning of Isaiah 28:9-13,16 “here a little and there a little”? Is this intended to be a guide for how to use key texts in the Scripture?
12. What will be the ultimate basis for peace, freedom and security? Isaiah 32:17 (*GNB*); Isaiah 64:5 (*GNB*); compare COL 97-98.
13. Who is going to live in the everlasting fires in the end? What is this fire, anyway? Isaiah 33:10-16; Compare Isaiah 6:6,7; Exodus 24:17; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Revelation 14:9-11.
14. Why did God feel it was necessary to step in at the time of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and slay the 185,000 Assyrians? (Isaiah 37:36; 2 Kings 19:35) Do you think Sennacherib’s insults had anything to do with it? (Isaiah 37:17,23,35) Read the full story in Isaiah 36 & 37 or 2 Kings 18:13-19:37.
15. Is it our mission, as suggested by Isaiah, to proclaim to the world, “Behold our God” (Isaiah 40:9-11)? What are we actually saying about our God today?
16. Look at Isaiah 43:25. “I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” (*RSV*) (Compare 37:35; 48:11) Is that good news? Will we be comfortable in the hereafter only because God has forgotten? Is the God we worship the kind of Person who could be trusted with the detailed knowledge of all the things we have ever done? When we get to heaven, how will Uriah treat David? Or will he not remember? Could we go to heaven and be trusted not to gossip about the sins of others? (Romans 1:29-31) When you are with influential friends, are you uncomfortable to have your mother near by? Do you think she would say anything to embarrass you? Does God ever embarrass His children? Could He? Why would God say that He blots out our sins for His own name’s sake?
17. What could possibly lead people to practice the folly of making a “god” out of something that you would normally use to warm your food? (Isaiah 44:9-20; compare 41:21-29; 46:5-7; Psalms 115:1-8; Habakkuk 2:18-19) Contrast this with the true God, what He wants, and what He does. (Isaiah 1:10-31; Isaiah 40)
18. See Isaiah 48:9,11. Does this seem selfish? Would we have any future if God were not the gracious, trustworthy Person we believe Him to be? In what sense does God do things “for My own name’s sake” (compare Isaiah 37:35; 42:21; 43:25)?
19. Is it still true that as we consider the sufferings and death of Christ “we thought his punishment was sent from God” (Isaiah 53:4)? Did God “lay on him the iniquity of us all” (vs. 6)?
20. Is it possible to keep Isaiah 58:13-14 legalistically? Would a parent dare to say to a child, “You have to eat your broccoli!” “Smile when you eat your broccoli!” “You must **enjoy** your broccoli!”--What is God saying about the Sabbath, here?
21. Could Isaiah 66:23 be true if the Sabbath were intended as an arbitrary test of our obedience or an arbitrary requirement? What function could it possibly serve after the judgment is over and the righteous are in heaven? Will God actually continue to test our obedience forever?
22. Why does Isaiah end with Isaiah 66:24? Is this a statement about the state of the dead?

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