

Life Lesson 103
Isaiah – Intro to the Major Prophets
Isaiah 40:8, 53

Introduction

We've studied the books of law, history, and poetry. Now we have come to a new section of the Bible, the major prophets.

A prophet isn't just a person who foretells the future, although most of the prophets told what would happen in later years. A prophet was one who spoke to the people for God. He would give God's people, especially the king, messages from God. He would preach to them and warn them to turn from their wicked ways. Most of the prophets also foretold the coming of Christ.

There were many prophets spoken of in the Bible. Not all of them wrote down their prophecies. Nathan, for instance, was a prophet during King David's time, but he didn't write any of the prophetic books.

There are five books which are called the "major prophets." This doesn't necessarily mean that they were more important than the others, but that they are longer. The other twelve prophetic books of the old testament are called the "minor prophets" because they are shorter.

The first of the major prophets was major in two ways. Isaiah wrote a longer book and he was also one of the most important of all the prophets.

The Story

Isaiah began his ministry when Uzziah was king. You will remember that Uzziah was the king took it upon himself to offer the sacrifices in the temple, which was a job

only for the priests. As a result of his trying to serve God in his own way, he was stricken with leprosy.

The year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision. He dreamed that he saw the Lord sitting on His throne in heaven. He saw the seraphim, a type of angel with six wings, standing by the throne crying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.”

When Isaiah saw God in his vision, he felt suddenly sinful and miserable. When we catch a glimpse of what God is like, that is our reaction. We feel like saying with Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am undone!”

The seraphim flew down to Isaiah with a coal from the altar. It touched Isaiah’s lips with the coal and said, Now your sin is taken away.”

When we see our sin, we can look to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross to save us and cleanse us, like the coal from the heavenly altar cleansed Isaiah.

Isaiah heard the voice of God saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Isaiah said, “Here am I, send me.”

When God saves us, He calls us to be witnesses for Him to those around us. It’s our job to tell others about Him and about how to be saved. I hope when God calls you, that you will say, “Here am I, send me.”

God sent Isaiah to speak to His chosen people. Isaiah was to warn them to turn from their wicked ways and to tell them about Jesus who would come to pay for their sin.

Isaiah was a faithful prophet. Sometimes the people became angry with him. Often they ignored him. Still, he kept on preaching to them and giving them God's messages.

After Uzziah died, Jotham became king. Isaiah advised Jotham and gave him God's messages. After Jotham died, he continued as prophet to wicked king Ahaz. After bad king Ahaz, Hezekiah came to the throne. What a relief it must have been to Isaiah to preach to a king who would listen to him!

You will remember that Isaiah was the prophet who warned Hezekiah that he would soon die. Hezekiah pleaded with God for a longer life. God consented, and sent Isaiah back to the palace with the message that the king could expect to recover from his illness.

Isaiah may have been the prophet to the next king, wicked king Manasseh, although that isn't certain. We do know, though, that he was the special prophet to kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

The best parts of the book of Isaiah in our Bible are the parts that tell about the coming of the Lord Jesus. It would be many hundreds of years before Jesus came to live on the earth, but God told Isaiah all about Him. Isaiah told the people about Jesus and wrote the things God told him down.

Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 53. This chapter tells all about the Lord Jesus and how He suffered for our sin. In verse three we read that, "He is despised and rejected of men." Do you remember how the people hit Jesus and made fun of Him before they

nailed Him to the cross? Even His disciples rejected Him and ran away, leaving Him alone.

In verse five we read that, “He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.”

This tells about when Jesus was nailed to the cross. He bore the punishment that our sin deserved. He was wounded by God and bruised for sins, so that we can be forgiven.

Verse six tells that we are like silly sheep that want to go in our own way. We each want to be our own boss, our own little god. That’s what sin is – being our own god instead of believing and surrendering to the true God.

The last part of verse six tells that God laid on Jesus the punishment for all our sins.

All through the book of Isaiah we can see many wonderful prophecies about Jesus. We can also see many wonderful promises. Isaiah 41:10 tells us, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Isn’t that a marvelous promise?

In Isaiah 40:8 we read that, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth but the word of our God shall stand forever.”

Think of all the grass and flowers that have grown and withered and died since Isaiah first wrote those words! Thousands of springs and falls have come and gone since

then. But God's word that He spoke through the prophet Isaiah is still in our hands this very day. It is still true, and it still speaks to the hearts of God's people. It has lasted for thousands of years – and it will last forever.

The Life Lesson

It's important to know the facts about the Bible. It's good for you to know about how Jesus' life and death on the cross was described by the prophets so many hundreds of years before He was born. There's something more important than just knowing *about* the Bible, though. It's important that you don't just know that we are all like sheep going astray -- but that you see that *you* are like a sheep who doesn't want the shepherd to be the boss. You want your own way. It's not enough to know that Jesus died on the cross. The devil knows that! Salvation means believing -- and believing enough to surrender to Him as your God. That means He becomes the boss and you do what He says, because you are His.

Review Questions

What was the prophets' job?

They spoke to the people for God and warned them to stop their evil ways. They often told what would happen in the future.

Why were some of the prophets called "major" prophets?

Because they wrote longer books.

Name one man who was king when Isaiah was serving God as a prophet.

Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah

What chapter tells about Jesus and His death on the cross?

Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 says we are all like what animal?

A sheep

How are we like sheep?

Everyone wants to go their own way, be their own boss.

How can we be forgiven for our sins?

God laid the punishment for those sins on Jesus.

Isaiah said that the grass withers and the flowers fade, but what lasts forever?

The Word of God.