

# Outlines in the Book of Isaiah

## Classifying the prophets of the Bible

There are a number of ways in which the prophets of the Bible may be classified.

### 1. In relation to the Exile

The **Exile** refers to the capture and deportation of the **Southern Kingdom** of Judah to **Babylon** during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

Note the “things that differ.” The “Exile” refers to the Southern Kingdom and its *captivity*. The “Dispersion” refers to the Northern Kingdom, its capture by the Assyrians and the *scattering* of the people throughout the nations. Scripturally, to be exiled is not the same as being dispersed. The former retains the identity and integrity of the kingdom – vital and divinely ordained so that the prophecies concerning the Messiah will be fulfilled through Judah. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2); the latter term “dispersion” refers to the deconstruction of the kingdom.

We have therefore:

- The **pre-exilic** prophets – those who ministered *before* the Exile of Judah to Babylon (586 BC).
- The **exilic** prophets who ministered during the time of Judah’s Exile in Babylon, such as Ezekiel and Daniel.
- The **post-exilic** prophets are those who ministered *after* the Exile – during the time of the Persian Empire.

### 2. In relation to the audience

The prophets of the Bible can also be classified according to *whom* they ministered – whether they spoke to the Northern Kingdom, the Southern Kingdom, to both kingdoms or to the Gentiles.

### 3. In relation to the manner in which they prophesied

Another distinction between them can be made in regard to *how* they prophesied – in writing (literary prophets) or in the spoken word (oral prophets).

### 4. In relation to the extent of their prophecy

This refers to the volume of their prophecy (not to their importance). So we get the distinction between the “Major and “Minor” prophets.

## The man Isaiah

It was Isaiah who was moved by the Spirit of God to declare the foundation of Bible prophecy.

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9-10).

In this declaration we have five essentials of divine prophecy, each of which are founded upon the inviolable attributes of God.<sup>1</sup>

1. God’s distinctive *Person*, for there is none else, revealing prophecy’s singular, divine source.
2. God’s distinctive *personality*, because there is none like me, revealing prophecy’s divine moral basis.
3. God’s distinctive *perception* and *prescience*, for He alone knows the end from the beginning, revealing prophecy’s divine vision.
4. God’s distinctive *pronouncement* in declaring the things not yet done, speaking of prophecy’s divine revelation to man for his good and for God’s glory.
5. God’s distinctive *prerogative* because His counsel shall stand, He will do His pleasure, revealing prophecy’s divine purpose, which is ultimately unto His glory.

Who then was Isaiah, this revered man anointed of God? We are informed that he was the son of Amoz (1:1), who some regard as among the wealthy families of the day, most likely living in Jerusalem. According to oral tradition, Amoz was a brother of Amaziah, the son of Joash, the king of Judah (2 Kings 14:1). Our prophet would then have moved within royal circles and fittingly possess a good knowledge of the religious and political circumstances of his day.

The name “Isaiah” means the “salvation of Jehovah”, a name that reflects the essence of his ministry. He was married (8:3) and had two sons, *Shear-jasub* (a remnant shall return) and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* (spoil and rob quickly).

The historical and biblical record testifies to Isaiah as a revered man of God in his day who stood stately and noble among men –ever willing to herald the oracles of God. He is listed among the Major Prophets. Tradition has it that Isaiah was martyred during the infamous reign of Manasseh – being sawn asunder.

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<sup>1</sup> “Outlines in Bible Prophecy” J W de SILVA, John Ritchie Publishing Ltd.



## The historical context

When we consider God's earthly people, it is imperative to note that they have a history – “that which had gone before.” It will bring their present position into greater light and give us a deeper understanding of the judgments and promises of God as proclaimed by His prophets, which otherwise may be considered arbitrary and bewildering. Specifically, we need to reflect upon the people in regard to:

- What they *were* – the elect of God and to bear testimony to His glory.
- What they had been delivered *from* – Egyptian bondage and burden.
- What *God* had brought them *into* – promised blessings in the Land.
- What *they* had brought themselves *into* – disobedience and divine judgment.

We cannot enter into these matters here, but note one example. Consider the words of God in Exodus 3:8. “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey....” Then ask why in Isaiah we get the promise of the birth of a divine Deliverer, the dispersion of the northern kingdom by Assyria, and the Babylonian captivity of Judah and its deliverance by the Medo-Persians. The answers will, if we read the historical account of the nation rightly, reveal radiant lines of truth that converge upon the divine approbation revealed by Isaiah:

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles....Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa 42:1; 52:13).

## Thematic threads in Isaiah

We can identify five interlacing themes that compose the framework of the book of Isaiah. They reflect the moral and social decline within the two kingdoms, along with the political and civil turmoil among the heathen nations. Weaving throughout the entire book we have the unconditional threads of God's sure mercies to His covenant people. The five themes are as follows:

- **Messianic:** The Messiah's Person, sufferings, glory, judgments and Second Advent.
- **Judicial:** God's judgments upon His elect nation and upon the nations.
- **Historical:** An account of the moral, commercial and political condition of the day.
- **Prophetical:** Prophecy relating to the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, the coming Messiah, the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Covenantal:** Judgment according to the Mosaic Covenant. Prophecy relating to the unconditional fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant and the New Covenant.

## Divisions of the book of Isaiah

We can allow two broad divisions in the book as well as a threefold division along historical and prophetic lines after W E Vine, A C Gaebelein and others. All are useful.

### The twofold division

**Division 1: Chapters 1–39: God’s rebuke and His remembrance of His people.**

*God’s rebuke of His people* – which is in regard to their breach of the conditional **Mosaic Covenant**.

“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. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isa 1:1–4).

*His remembrance of His people* – which is in regard to the unconditional **Abrahamic Covenant** and its fulfillment in the promised Messiah, Christ Jesus.

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa 7:14–15).

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:1–2).

Note that these two covenants are integral to the framework of Bible prophecy and, that OT prophecy is in regard to God’s earthly people – Israel

**Division 2: Chapters 40–66: The repentance and divine restoration of His people**

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa 40:1–5).

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I

gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee. I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west” (Isa 43:1-5).

“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD” (Isa 59:20).

## **The threefold division**

### **Division 1. Early prophecies**

Chapters 1-12:	Prophecies under the reign of Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz.
Chapters 13-27:	The judgment of the nations and the future day of Jehovah.
Chapters 28-35:	The six woes; judgment ruin and restoration.

### **Division 2. Historical Parenthesis**

Chapters 36-39

### **Division 3. Later Prophecies**

Chapters 40-48:	The deliverance from Babylon by the Persians under Cyrus.
Chapters 49-57:	Christ – the Servant of Jehovah; His suffering and glories.
Chapters 58-66:	Future history of the nation of Israel and the coming Age.

## **Messianic prophecies in Isaiah**

The book of Isaiah is second to the Psalms in regard to the number of prophecies concerning the Messiah. They can be arranged as follows:

### **The deity of the Messiah**

#### *The thrice holy God*

He is Jehovah. The first verses of Isaiah 6 beholds the glory of one who can only be Jehovah, who is identified as the thrice holy God – “holy, holy, holy!

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”

In Revelation 4 the One on the throne is acclaimed as the thrice Holy God – holy, holy, holy – Jehovah. He is also accorded the unique note of praise in that He is worthy to receive glory and honour and power.

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts

give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev 4:9-11).

Then in Revelation 5 we have the Lamb being afforded that same note of praise.

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever" (Rev 5:12-14).

Solomon was majestic in his appointments and mighty in power and wisdom, but all this he had by divine benefaction. The One greater than Solomon is acclaimed at the highest level, not because of divine benefaction but because of his divine Person and inherent perfection.

#### *God with us*

In chapters 7 and 8 Isaiah refers to the Messiah as "Immanuel" meaning "God with us."

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14). "And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel" (Isa 8:8). "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us [Immanuel]" (Isa 8:19).

This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt 1:23).

#### **The incarnation of the Messiah.**

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isa 7:14-15). "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt 1:23).

#### **The subjection of the Messiah.**

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa 53:1-2).

#### **The servitude of the Messiah.**

He is to be a servant of Jehovah (never a servant *of* man).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” (Isa 42:1). “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa 52:13).

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, ‘Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles .....’” (Matt 12:18-21).

### **The suffering of the Messiah.**

We have this clearly prophesied in Isaiah 53. It was this passage that the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading when Phillip drew near and declared that it spoke of Christ.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

“And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:34-35).

### **The second advent of the Messiah.**

It is fitting that the prophecy that beholds the suffering servant points to Him as the coming exalted Sovereign.

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa 52:13).

“Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously” (Isa 24:23).

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:6-7).

## Selected prophecies in Isaiah concerning the Messiah

Ref.	Prophecy	Text	Fulfillment/To be fulfilled
6:9-10	The hardening of the people's heart to the Messiah.	"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."	John 12:37-40: "Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. Therefore they could not believe that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."
7:1	The Virgin Birth and deity (Immanuel, God with us).	"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."	Luke 1:34-35: "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 5 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God [thus God with us]."
8:14	The Messiah will be a stumbling stone to the house of Israel.	"And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."	1 Peter 2:8: "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."
9:1-2	The Messiah will minister in Galilee.	" NEVERTHELESS the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."	Matt 4:12-17: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim...From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent. for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

9.6	The Lord's humanity (a child is <i>born</i> ); His incarnation and deity (a son is <i>given</i> , the mighty God and the Father of eternity). His world rule.	"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."	Matt 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save his people from their sins."
9.7	His Millennial reign on David's throne and everlasting kingdom.	"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."	To be fulfilled.
11:10 etc.	His Millennial reign will bring in righteousness, peace and rest.	"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."	To be fulfilled.
53:3	His rejection by the nation of Israel at His First Advent.	"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.	Fulfilled.
49:3	His restoration of Israel at His Second Advent.	"And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."	To be fulfilled.
53:4	His death at the cross and sin bearing as admitted by the faithful Jewish remnant in the Tribulation.	"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."	To be fulfilled.
53:10	His sin-bearing work on the cross.	"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,"	Fulfilled.
61:2	His mission of salvation and peace through the Gospel.	"To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,"	Luke 4:19: "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Fulfilled in His earthly ministry.
61:2	His Second Advent – the day of His wrath on earth.	"To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."	To be fulfilled.

## **The divine covenants in Isaiah**

When God inspired the OT prophets to speak, it was within the framework of the divine covenants that He made with His earthly people, Israel. There was the conditional Mosaic covenant given at Sinai. Despite many warnings from the prophets, the nation defiled this covenant and lost the blessing of the land, being dispersed or taken into exile by the Gentiles. We have a good deal of this judicial ministry from Isaiah. Then we have the unconditional covenants noted above and below, telling of blessings coming to Israel in a still future day – also spoken of by Isaiah. There were no covenants made by God with the Gentiles (nations). Accordingly, we speak of the divine unconditional covenants and their fulfillment in regard to *Israel*, their blessings to the nations come as a *consequence* of the fulfillment of those unconditional covenants to Israel.

### **The Abrahamic covenant – the restoration of Israel and blessing to the nations.**

These blessings are declared in Genesis 12. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:2-3). And so says Isaiah, first in regard to Israel, then in regard to the nations:

#### **Israel**

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa 11:10-12).

#### **The nations**

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:2-4).

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa 60:3).

### **The Palestinian covenant – Israel’s restoration to the land.**

“For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors” (Isa 14:1-2).

### **The Davidic covenant – the restoration of the throne.**

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:7)

### **The New covenant– Israel’s spiritual restoration.**

“And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” (Isa 33:24).  
“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sin.” (Isa 43:25).

“As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever” (Isa 59:21 c.f. the *blessings* entered into through the New covenant by believers today by virtue of its Mediator – Christ, the Head of the Church, Heb 8; 10).

## **Selected Prophecies in Isaiah regarding Israel and Judah**

### **Prophecy regarding Assyria and the Northern Kingdom – the Dispersion**

This prophecy was precipitated by the disobedience of both Israel and Judah. God would allow the Assyrians to conquer and disperse the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which, as we know, was fulfilled in 722 BC. Judah too would be oppressed by Assyria – but only “to the neck” and not conquered (Babylon was to be God’s instrument for this).

“Forasmuch as this people [Israel] refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin [king of Syria] and Remaliah's son [who was Pekah, the then idolatrous king of Israel]; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel” (vv 6–8).

### **Prophecy regarding Babylon and the Southern Kingdom – the Exile**

In chapter 13 we have two prophecies concerning Babylon – one fulfilled the other still future. Isaiah presents what is yet future, first in verses 1–16, “the burden of Babylon.” It tells of that future Babylonian system prophesied in Revelation 18.

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (Rev 1–3).

Then, in verse 17 Isaiah reverts to the nearer prophecy regarding Babylon and he predicts its fall at the hands of the Medes, 539 BC (also prophesied by Daniel, the second world kingdom symbolized as the arms and breast of silver in his great image, Dan 2).

“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isa 13:17-19).

We have the same prophecy in Isaiah 39. It was prompted by the indiscretion of Hezekiah before the Babylonian envoy (indicative of the failure of Judah), when he claimed his wealth and possessions as his own, when in fact they belonged to God. “Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD” (Isa 39:5-6). All the holy vessels and implements were carried off to Babylon (they were used sacrilegiously by Belshazzar in that fateful feast, Dan 5). This is another prophecy which was remarkably fulfilled many decades later. It is especially significant because at that time *Assyria* was the major known world power and oppressor of Judah, not Babylon.

#### **Prophecy regarding Babylon, the Medo-Persians and the Southern Kingdom**

Isaiah prophesied that a king anointed of God would take up the cause of Judah and end its captivity under Babylon. Isaiah even named the king – Cyrus. God said of Cyrus, “he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure. even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa 44:28). Centuries after this prophecy was made Cyrus came into power (the Medo-Persian Empire) and in the course of his reign he issued a decree allowing Judah to return to its homeland.

#### **Isaiah 57: The Great Tribulation, apostate Israel and the Antichrist**

The opening verses of this chapter are solemn. They tell of a future time – the Great Tribulation when the righteous on earth are persecuted and slain without scruple. “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come” (v 1). However, these martyrs are not forgotten by God. “He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness” (v 2).

#### **Prophecies concerning the Nations**

Isaiah (along with Jeremiah and Ezekiel), speaks of the burden [judgment] of the nations in chapters 13-24, as they relate to Judah and Israel – at that time *and* in regard to times that are still future. Israel is a disobedient nation. God has used the nations to bring Israel under judgment by giving them power over His people. However, at the same time He pronounces judgment upon Israel, He assures the nation that He is a merciful and covenant keeping God and will bring the nations to account for their excessive and harsh dealings against the “apple of His eye.” “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; after the glory hath He

sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye” (Zech 2:8).

For example:

**Isa 13:1** – The burden of Babylon.

**Isa 14:25** – The judgment of Assyria

**Isa 14:28–32** – The judgment of Philista [Philistines].

**Isa 15:1** – The burden of Moab.

**Isa 17:1** – The burden of Damascus.

**Isa 19:1** – The burden of Egypt.

**Isa 21:1** – The burden of the desert of the sea [Persian Gulf].

**Isa 21:11** – The burden of Dumah [Idumah or Edom].

**Isa 21:13** – The burden upon Arabia.

**Isa 22:1** – The burden of the valley of vision [Jerusalem].

**Isa 23:1** – The burden of Tyre.

**Isa 24** – The judgment of all the earth.

Two matters need to be kept before us if we are to correctly interpret these passages. First, the distinction between Judah and Israel; second, the distinction between the nearer and distant prophecies. We noted an example above in regard to Babylon. The key to identifying the distant prophecy is the expression “in that day” and its companion expression, “the Day of the Lord [Jehovah].” They refer to that which is yet to be fulfilled associated with the Second Advent of Christ.

## **The use of Isaiah in the NT**

The *selectivity* and *sequence* with which OT prophecies are quoted in the NT is a mark of the divine inspiration of Scripture. It is an observation little noted and much less appreciated. In the following portion we note three examples connected with the prophecies of Isaiah.

### **Man’s wilful rejection followed by God’s judicial blindness.**

God deals with man according to divine principles. One such principle is that when man intractably decides *not* believe God, God will ensure that he *cannot* believe. The prerogative in persons and timing is all of God. “My spirit will not always strive with man” (Gen 6:3). This principle was true in the instance of Pharaoh. In Exodus we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart and *then*, in judgment, God stepped in and hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he could not believe. “But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he [not God] hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them [Moses and Aaron]; as the LORD had said.” And again, “Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go” (Ex 8:15, 32).

We have this illustrated in the NT. Intractable unbelief occurs and God's judgment is then declared. He blinds the people judicially so they cannot believe. So we have in Matthew 12:24 the intractable unbelief from the rulers of Israel.

"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."

This is immediately followed by the judicial blindness imposed upon them and the nation by the Lord as declared by Isaiah.

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive," (Matt 13:14).

We have a similar sequence in the Fourth Gospel and, in line with its theme the added principle of divine judgment in association with the divine glory.

"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory [Isa 6], and spake of him" (Jn 12:37-41).

### **The genealogy of Christ – Israel's Messiah**

In Matthew chapters 2-3 we have Christ in fulfilment of OT *prophecy*; in chapter 4 we have Christ's perfect *humanity*; in chapter 5 His divine *authority* and, in chapter 8, we have His *deity* demonstrated when He healed a leper. However, if Christ is to be recognized as Israel's Messiah, He must, in the first instance have legal right to the throne of David. This is why Matthew begins his Gospel with the *legal genealogy* of Christ. It also explains why Matthew's genealogy of Christ is associated with Isaiah 7, rather than with Isaiah 9 which contains a similar prophecy.

At this point in history, Pekah, the king of Israel (the northern kingdom) and his ally Rezin, the king of Syria (Aram) threatened Judah (the southern kingdom). God promised Ahaz the king of Judah protection. God invited Ahaz to ask for a sign in or under the heavens as proof of this promise. In false piety Ahaz said he preferred not to test God and refused God's offer. God then took the opportunity to reveal through Isaiah a coming sign relating to a greater promise – one concerning the *entire* nation, the **house of David**, even the king of *Israel* (2 Chron 8:11). It speaks of the First Advent of Christ and the Messiah having claim to David's throne.

"And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]" (Isa 7:13-14).

And so we have in the first chapter of Matthew the selective quotation from Isaiah, from chapter 7 rather than from chapter 9.

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham...Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

### **The acceptable year of the Lord**

Isaiah 61:1-2: “The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

This prophecy by Isaiah relates to the Lord’s First Advent and His anointing for His earthly ministry. Our Lord read this portion (Luke 4:17-19), after which He did two significant things. First, He said unto his disciples, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” giving the clearest of proofs that He was the literal fulfilment of this prophecy (Luke 4:21). Second, He did not read the part relating to the day of vengeance. This is because it relates to a still distant day. It too will be fulfilled literally – at His Second Advent. This is the day of vengeance and victory when the Messiah rejoices among His restored earthly people (Isa 61:4-9; 10-11; 63:4). Paul has no doubt the day and its aftermath is literal (2 Thess 1:7-8). It is a gross error to spiritualize the fulfilment of the latter portion of the passage given that its first part has been fulfilled literally.