



ISAIAH: THE MESSAGE OF HOPE

Lesson 1 - A Prophetic Voice
Teacher's Notes

INTRODUCTION

I. 📖 How do you define “greatness”?

1. 📖 Is it in terms of military might? Financial successes? Winsome personality? Political clout?
2. Charles V illustrates how many define “greatness.”

Charles V was Emperor of Germany, King of Spain, and Lord of the Netherlands. He was born at Ghent in the year 1500. Over his lifetime, he was victorious in most of his sixty battles, obtained six triumphs, conquered four kingdoms, and added eight principalities to his dominions. His biography is an unparalleled instance of worldly prosperity and the greatness of human glory. Without question, Charles V would be applauded as a “great” man by today’s standards.

3. 📖 But our Lord talked of “another” standard of greatness (Matthew 20:20-28). The Lord’s standard of greatness is preferred because it offers greatness for eternity.

II. 📖 The prophet Isaiah lived during the last half of the eighth century B.C.

1. 📖 The book bearing Isaiah’s name is universally recognized as the most profound in foretelling of the coming Messiah.

Artists, poets, and authors have long relied upon the amazing prophecy of Isaiah to provide the materials for their works.

2. 📖 Isaiah is the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. “Isaiah is the greatest; indeed, Isaiah is the king of all prophets.”¹

III. A study of the book of Isaiah is a rewarding and challenging task.

1. 📖 The prophecy deals with religious, moral, and political issues that are as current as this morning’s newspaper.
2. 📖 The book contains a large amount of predictive prophecy concerning events and personalities far removed from Isaiah’s day.
3. 📖 The prophecy presents a clear portrayal of the coming Christ (59:20, “A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD”).
4. 📖 The words of the prophecy are addressed to those surrounded by worldly indifference, false security, haughty pride, boastful military powers, and a multitude of religious practices that were performed for the purpose of gaining an emotional stimulation leading to sensationalism instead of worship that is in truth and spirit.
5. 📖 The prophet’s words speak to hearts that need hope revived and confidence in the Almighty God restored.



6. 🕊️ Isaiah spoke to God's People who had compromised conviction and divided devotion so all sensitivities to spiritual matters were numb. As a nation they went through the motions and practiced the actions, however their hearts had become calloused and their spirits were diseased (6:9-10).
7. 🕊️ The "greatness" of Isaiah emerges as he repeatedly refuses to be intimidated and silenced by compromise.
8. 🕊️ Isaiah boldly presented God's Truth because he understood the majesty and righteousness of God (6:1-7). The prophet's dedication was complete. Isaiah's diligence in duty was constant.

IV. Our treatment of this prophecy will be brief.

We seek to present the major emphases of Isaiah's prophecy and offer a synopsis that stimulates a desire for further study and deeper understanding of the prophecy.

V. We need to examine the character of the prophet. Isaiah's character is revealed throughout the prophecy. As we study this character revealed in Scriptures, we see emerging a portrait of "greatness" that every Christian should emulate!

A GREAT CHARACTER'S SUMMARY

I. Isaiah's biography is brief.


- A. 🕊️ We are informed that he was the son of "Amoz" (1:1) and this is all we know of his genealogy.
- B. 🕊️ We know that he was married and had two children.
 1. His wife was known as the "prophetess" (8:3).
 2. His two sons were named as object lessons for predictive prophecies (7:3; 8:3).
 - a. His oldest son was named "Shear-jashub" and symbolized that a "remnant" of Israel would be preserved in spite of the national disasters that would befall Judah.
 - b. The youngest son, named "Maher-shalal-hashbaz," symbolized the fulfilling of God's Word as Assyria swept through Syria and Israel. The Assyrians would rush to the spoil as they conquered those nations.
 3. Look at Isaiah's family and discover the blessings of a home led by a godly husband and father, ordered by a devout wife and mother, and honored by obedient children.
- C. 🕊️ It is often suggested that Isaiah was a member of royalty - the cousin of King Uzziah.²
 1. This is suggested because Isaiah enjoyed free access and interaction with the four Kings who reigned during his prophetic career (probably he also lived under King Manasseh and was murdered by that evil King).



2. Isaiah also enjoyed a freedom of access to the Priests (Isaiah 8).
 3. The vocabulary, use of metaphors, grasp of international events, and a number of other "internal" factors combine to suggest that Isaiah came from the cultured echelon of Judah's aristocracy.
 4. Isaiah's literary style has been described as "the masterpiece of Hebrew literature. He is also famous for his vocabulary and richness of synonyms. Ezekiel uses 1,535 words; Jeremiah, 1,653; the Psalmists, 2,170; Isaiah 2,186."³
- II. While the historicity of Isaiah's heritage and personal history are shrouded in secrecy, the prophet's personality is evident in his writings.
- A. Throughout the prophecy we discover the greatness of the character of one chosen by God to publish the coming Christ!
 - B. Notice the admirable traits of his character.
 1. These traits challenge Christians to develop the same type of personality that will enable them to be effective in publishing God's marvelous scheme of redemption.
 2. Here are the traits that made Isaiah "unquestionably the most imposing figure of his age."⁴

A GREAT CHARACTER'S SPECIFICS

I. An unquestioning FAITH in the Almighty God.


- A. Isaiah's discussion with King Ahaz (7:1-12) focuses attention upon the prophet's faith in God.
 1. Isaiah believed that Jehovah God was the Governor of history.
 2. Isaiah was convinced that the world was in God's hands and under God's control.
 3. Isaiah found it incredible to believe that Ahaz would be intimidated by a mortal power that was destined for destruction by the Almighty God.
 - a. Ahaz sought protection by submitting to Assyria's domination.
 - b. The cowardly King Ahaz went to Damascus and sought to please the Assyrian Emperor Tiglath-pileser by setting up in the Jerusalem Temple an altar that duplicated the Assyrian alter celebrating victory in war.
 - c. This pagan altar replaced Solomon's brazen altar.
 - d. Further compromise of the King's faith is seen when he sacrificed his sons to the pagan gods (2 Kings 16:10-16; 2 Chronicles 28).
 - e. These were unthinkable actions to Isaiah.
- B. Isaiah would allow his faith to be  intimidated by no one!



1. The prophet held to an uncompromising faith.
2. Isaiah knew what God required and he refused to allow fear to move him away from that absolute knowledge.
3. Isaiah's faith was so strong that it emboldened the prophet to speak bluntly of God's abilities.
4. In the first century, our brethren would imitate this uncompromising faith of Isaiah (Acts 5:29, 40-42).


II.  **An unruffled CALM CONFIDENCE in God's promises.**

A.  In rebuking Ahaz's lack of faith, Isaiah demonstrated a calm confidence in God.

1. The prophet counseled the King to be calm (7:4).
 - a. Isaiah was told to take his son (Shear-jashub) to the King. The son's name indicated that God's people would not perish (the "remnant").
 - b. The King was invited to ask for a sign (7:11); and, finally the prophet spoke of the coming Christ (7:14).
2. Isaiah, and all who share his personality, enjoy calm in the midst of trials because "God is with us."  *What seemed a "terror" to Ahaz was actually a "trifle" to the prophet - it all depended upon one's faith!*

B. Throughout his prophecy Isaiah speaks with words of comfort.

1. He urged them to avoid the struggles and trials of life by trusting and obeying God.
2. He repeatedly reminded them that God had not forgotten them but is working along the divine scheme to fulfill His purposes (18:1ff).

C.  When the nation faced the fierce Assyrian power, fear arose and mortal wisdom counseled that a treaty be made with Egypt.

1. Isaiah pled for a calm, trusting confidence in the Almighty's power (30:15).
2. Isaiah confidently realized that only God could offer genuine protection.
3. The prophet's counsel was rejected (30:16). Even though he was ignored, Isaiah continued to insist that Judah's rulers demonstrate calm confidence in Jehovah's protection (31:1, 3; 26:13).

D.  Isaiah's example encourages Christians to be encouraged by their faith in God.

1. How great is your God? What is greater than your God? These are questions that Isaiah confidently answered.



2. The God of Isaiah was greater than any obstacle, and those who trusted in that God would never be disappointed.
- E. The great faith of Isaiah offered calm in the midst of chaos.
1. Isaiah found freedom from fear because he trusted God.
 2. The prophet urged a like-faith upon the King and citizens.
 3. Those lacking this faith shrank back and shook with fear (Isaiah 7:2b).
 4. God offered security in this time of fear, but only Isaiah enjoyed this security because of his great faith. His example is a great challenge to Christians!
 5. When your calm dissolves into chaos, do you shrink back and tremble in fear or do you look confidently to the Lord God Almighty who will protect and comfort? (2 Chronicles 14:9-11; Psalm 56:4; 118:6; Hebrews 13:6).

III. 📖 An intense DISTRESS at man's cynicism and folly.

- A. Isaiah was astonished/shocked that his people would treat God's commands so lightly and shun dependence upon God's strength so quickly (8:11-12).
1. The prophet bluntly condemned those who shunned God's power for earthly power (28:17-18).
 2. Isaiah illustrated the folly of trusting worldliness for security by walking about Jerusalem in the dress of a slave (20:2-4; 30:7ff).
 3. The prophet stressed that when we shun God's power and trust worldly power, we become enslaved to fear!
- B. The prophet's distress is again evident when King Hezekiah was elated over the friendship of the Babylonian King.
1. Isaiah denounced the partnership and predicted that such would ultimately lead to the destruction of Judah (39:5-7).
 2. Isaiah was appalled that good King Hezekiah would try to impress the evil Babylonian King.
- C. Throughout the prophecy, Isaiah's greatest distress is always seen when God's people refused to trust in the security and power of the Almighty and chose to trust in worldly weapons for security (22:8, 11).
1. Isaiah was shocked with incredulity that Judah would act as if there was no God and no divine scheme of history.
 2. They acted as if they were all alone; as if their deeds were carried out in the darkness; as if THEY were superior to God (29:15-16).



3. The prophet was angered by this flagrant rejection of the Almighty God's sovereignty.
- D. True "greatness" in our modern culture ought to reflect this same distress when respect for God's sovereignty is missing.
 1. ☞ Many today cower in silence instead of standing boldly for God's Truth.
 2. ☞ Most admit there is evil and they are distressed by it, but very few have the courage to follow Isaiah's greatness and speak against the evil!
 3. How distressed are you with those who face trials in life and choose worldly power instead of divine might for the answer to their problems?
 4. ☞ Paul demonstrated this same distress as he looked at the domination of sin (Acts 17:16, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols" ; Romans 10:1-2, "brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge") and learned of brethren's struggles to remain committed to God (2 Corinthians 11:28, "there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches").
 5. Let all Christians today determine they will emulate Isaiah and Paul and display an intense distress at the way sin dominates man's choices!

IV. ☞ An utter DISTRUST of worldly power to deliver.

- A. The prophet did not share Napoleon's misguided trust - "The side with the largest canon wins."
 1. Isaiah saw the vast armies and the military power of worldly empires as unable to deliver (9:4-5).
 2. He saw the pomp and ceremony of royal courts as ineffective in providing security (14:5, 11).
 3. Isaiah saw worldly might as evidence of man's arrogance toward God (2:22; 33:22; 30:1-2).
 4. Those who trust upon mortality for security will be ashamed (30:5, 7).
 5. Isaiah demonstrated an unforgiving OPPOSITION to anyone who dared suggest that military alliances would offer greater security than loyalty to God (30:15).
- B. Isaiah's commendable attitude is lacking in many today.
 1. ☞ Many admit their need for deliverance but they seek a deliverance that is fashioned to their will instead of God's will.
 2. Man is obligated to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling," but such is to be in accordance with God's revealed will and not man's personal desires. Erring man



may try every conceivable idea on how to save himself. Until man cooperates with God's directions, he cannot save himself (Acts 2:36-39; Philippians 2:12).

C. The lost man can never "pay" enough to save himself.

1. Erring man cannot pray enough to save himself. Only by following God's directions and doing what God commands is erring man able to be saved (Acts 2:36-39; 9:5-6; 11:13-14).
2. How tragic to hear a sinner say, "I know I'm not a Christian but I do as well as many others who claim to be a 'Christian.' I am just as saved as they are!"
3. Learn from Isaiah that a person's "greatness" is evident in the fact that he does not think they can deliver themselves - they have to trust and obey God's Word!

V.  **An amazing ENCOURAGEMENT to commit to God's will.**


A. As the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, the prophet's strong voice urged King Hezekiah to remain confident in God's protection.

1. This section (chapters 36-37) is one of the most encouraging sections of Scripture.
2. It encourages a confident trust in Jehovah God's care.
3. At the time Isaiah spoke these words all seemed desperate: all neighboring kingdoms had either been defeated or had surrendered; the country had been overrun and forty-six cities had been lost; the Egyptian alliance had failed; Jerusalem was all alone.
4. However, in the middle of all confusion and fear the prophet issued words of strong encouragement (37:22-29).
5. Isaiah's example encouraged King Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem to remain committed to Jehovah God!

B. What a wonderful trait!

How wonderful it is to be known as a person that places complete commitment in God's care.

C. Let us remain faithful to God's will.

1. Let the prophet's life urge us to be committed to God's directives.
2. The Devil will do everything he can to discourage this steadfast commitment but we must resist his temptations to lessen our commitment (Revelation 2:10).
3. The tribulations of the world may be harsh and unfair, but Christians must never stop trusting in God for their help.
4.  The assurance spoken to King Hezekiah also applies to Christians today "Because you have prayed to Me ... the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this ... I will defend this house" (37:21, 32, 53).




5. When the trials of life strike you hard, find security in the faith you have committed to God and you will find deliverance (Jonah 2:2, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice"). There is wonderful joy in the hearts of those committed to God's will.

VI.  **An inspired KNOWLEDGE of Jehovah God.**


- A. One of the greatest traits of Isaiah was his knowledge about God.

1. Isaiah reveals aspects of God that all need to know.

 Isaiah spoke about: the anger of God (5:24, 25; 9:14-19; cf 9:20; 10:4; 33:14); the terrible judgment of God (30:27-28; 13:11-13); the justice of God (5:15-16); the great sorrow of God over man's choice to sin (1:2-4, 11-15); the end of God's patience (13:3); the Fatherhood of God (1:2; 30:1); the intolerance of God (1:22-27); the sorrow of God (14:1; 10:25; 26:20); the grace of God (30:18); and, the sovereign control of God (14:27).

2. The vision of Isaiah (6:1ff) introduced the prophet to the awesome holiness of Jehovah God.

This event fixed in Isaiah's mind a knowledge that directed everything the prophet did in life. Knowing God changed Isaiah!

- B. Here was a man who "knew" God.  This knowledge identified Isaiah as God's man. This knowledge governed Isaiah's behavior in life.

1. If "greatness" is measured by one's knowledge of the Almighty God, how "great" are you? How well do you "know" the Almighty God?
2. This knowledge will humble the arrogant heart and control the angry tongue.
3. This knowledge will control behavior so that one lives a sanctified life (See Ephesians 4:17-31).
4. Isaiah "knew" Jehovah God and thus he was a "great" man. Let all today be challenged to follow the same example!

VII.  **An uncompromising EXCLUSIVENESS for God.**

- A. Isaiah stresses that there is but ONE God.

1. Isaiah is very clear in stating that God is the only one who must be obeyed!
2. Those failing to honor this exclusive devotion, face punishment (31:4; 5:1-7).
3. Those who failed to honor God's exclusiveness caused Isaiah's heart to suffer great grief (22:4).

- B. Isaiah's uncompromising personality is evident in his reprimands of the national idolatry.



1. 🕊️ The prophet never yielded his position that Judah had abandoned God for the imaginations of man (1:4; 5:24).
 2. 🕊️ Isaiah denounces idolatry as ignorance and charges them with a refusal to hear, heed, and obey God's will (32:9ff; 1:3; 5:12, 13).
 3. Their arrogance brought ignorance and punishment (29:14).
- C. Modern culture fails to appreciate that the man or woman who jealously guards the exclusiveness of Jehovah God is "great."
1. Many who wish to forget God, or, at least, relegate God to a position of minimal influence.
 2. Many live as though there is no God. These are not in open rebellion to God. They simply ignore God and dismiss the Almighty's authority to control their lives.
 3. Many are unwilling to admit there is an exclusive God who is justified in issuing restrictive guidelines that tell them what is right or wrong. Most are eager to accept God as long as He does not inconvenience their lifestyles.
 4. Thus, God is often quietly set aside as if He were some outdated idol or "good luck charm." They subtly ignore the exclusive claim that Jehovah God not only commands certain behavior but also demands punishment for those who are not obedient to the commands.
- D. 🕊️ Have modern Christians allowed the world's "tolerance" to moderate the expected zeal for righteousness?
1. Why is it that ethical and moral matters are largely ignored or explained away as "hopeless"?
 2. Discussion on the social drinking of alcoholic beverages used to be sounded long and strong insisting that biblical teaching strictly forbids even one drop!
 3. In previous years, no one would ever imagine that there would be a voiced "tolerance" for homosexuality.
 4. In the by-gone days, there was never a moment's thought given to the suggestion that the great Jehovah God of the Scriptures would "tolerate" the "intolerable" practices of the world.
 5. 🕊️ According to Isaiah, the God in heaven is a God with very exclusive limits and mankind must honor these limits!
 6. In marked contrast with Isaiah's unashamed statements regarding God's exclusiveness is modern man's "timidity." Today many are hesitant to speak boldly against the moral and ethical errors of society because they fear "offending" those who are wrong.
 - a. The Apostle urged young Timothy to guard against such timidity (2 Timothy 1:6-8).



b. Those apostolic warnings apply to modern saints. Let the godly greatness of Isaiah encourage more of us to become bold in asserting Jehovah God's exclusiveness!

CONCLUSION

- I. 🕊️ Isaiah's character makes him a "great" man!
 1. Throughout the prophecy, the prophet's character reveals dedication and commitment to the Lord God.
 2. Isaiah was determined that nothing and no one would draw him away from doing what was right.
- II. At the beginning of this lesson, the "greatness" of King Charles V was described.
 1. One would think that such feats of greatness would have made the King very happy.
 2. However, all the fruits of the King's ambition, and all the honors that attended him, could not bring to him true and solid satisfaction.
 3. This "great" man was most unhappy with all his successes!
 4. As he reflected on the evils and miseries that he had brought on the people, he was convinced of the emptiness of earthly magnificence, and he became disgusted with the splendor that surrounded him.
 5. He spent the rest of his days in solitude from all worldly affairs! Ironically, the one man that historians would see was truly "great," was truly "miserable"!
- III. Isaiah's contentment contrasts with the misery of Charles V.
 1. Centuries after he spoke God's Word, this prophet is acknowledged as "great."
 2. Isaiah's greatness resulted because of his character.
 3. The prophet did not place his trust upon the uncertainties of worldly treasures and worldly pride. Isaiah set his hope upon the Lord God Almighty and laid a foundation for genuine "greatness."
 4. Isaiah tells us today that true "greatness" results only when one submits to God's will and not worldly standards!
- IV. When your heart needs hope then remember the greatness of Isaiah the prophet! If you want to find true greatness then study Isaiah's prophecy and follow Inspiration's counsel.

¹ George L. Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954, 19.

² Robinson, 19.

³ Robinson, 23.

⁴ Robinson, 22.