

Face to Face  
with a  
*Holy* God

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## FACE-TO-FACE WITH A HOLY GOD

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# THE LORD CONTENDS WITH HIS PEOPLE




God speaks to man through His Word, the Bible. But do we listen? Do we read it and obey it? God spoke to Israel through His holy prophets, and many of their words are included in the Bible. But Israel often had a problem obeying God, and they faced the consequences.



## DAY ONE

As you read any book of the Bible, you'll see the author emphasize subjects by repeating key words and phrases. Since you'll be marking many of these words and phrases throughout Isaiah, a good technique is to record them and how you plan to mark them on a 3 x 5 card and use this as a bookmark. Doing this as you go from chapter to chapter will help you mark consistently and save time.

Now read through Isaiah 1 and mark every reference to *Israel*, *Lord*, *word*, and *sin*. You may want to mark *word* yellow and/or perhaps with the symbol of a book, like this:  . Mark *Lord* with a purple triangle shaded yellow, *Israel* with

blue, and *sin* brown. Also double underline in green any geographical references, and underline the names of any kings.

Think about what you've marked. Why is God sending this message? What is the problem in Judah and Jerusalem? What will God do? Is there any hope for the people?

Now determine what this chapter is about and record a theme for the chapter ISAIAH AT A GLANCE on page 121.

## DAY TWO

Don't forget to begin your study time with prayer. Remember, you have access to the Author, and He truly wants you to know, understand, and live by every word that comes from His mouth.

Take a moment to look at the chart on page 123 to see a timeline of kings and prophets. This will help you understand the historical context of Isaiah's life and writings.

Read 2 Kings 14:17–15:38 and 2 Chronicles 26:1–27:2 for insights on Uzziah (also called Azariah.)

Reviewing Israel's relationship to God will also be helpful, so read the following and consider why God can bring a "lawsuit" against Israel:

Exodus 24:1-8

Deuteronomy 24:1-20,45

Deuteronomy 30:1-5

## DAY THREE

Today read Isaiah 2 and make sure to mark references to

time with a clock as we mentioned in “How to Get Started.” However, mark *in the last days* differently from other time references.

*Nations* is a good word to mark throughout the Old Testament. Color it green and underline it with brown. Mark *proud*<sup>1</sup> with an arrow pointing up and *humble*<sup>2</sup> with an arrow pointing down. The Hebrew word translated *proud* literally means lifted up, and *humble* is the opposite of proud. Also mark *idols* and any synonyms for these key words.

Thinking about Isaiah 1 together with Isaiah 2, what does the future hold for Judah and Jerusalem? Is it good or bad?

Read Micah 4:1-3 and compare it to Isaiah 2:1-4. What do they have in common?

What about the proud? What’s in store for them? What application can you make for your life? We can easily view Israel or Judah with disdain—judging them for their idolatry, pride, and wealth—and forget that God preserved these Old Testament examples for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages has come (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

God calls the house of Jacob to “walk in the light of the LORD.” Does He expect any less from those in the New Covenant of grace? What about us? Are we walking in the light of the Lord or in the pride of life?

Think on these things and then record a theme for Isaiah 2 on ISAIAH AT A GLANCE.

## DAYS FOUR & FIVE

Today read Isaiah 3 and 4 and mark the key words on your bookmark. Also mark *judge* (*judgment*), *wicked*, and *righteous*, and add these to your bookmark.

Make note of contrasts in these chapters. What is being

contrasted? How are those things different? You can find some contrasts by locating the word *instead*.

Mark any time references as you have before.

What is God going to do to Judah and Jerusalem and why? Is this consistent with Isaiah 1 and 2? Do you see anything new here? Who specifically is being held accountable in Isaiah 3?

What do the women mentioned in Isaiah 3 remind us about our own lives?

Do these chapters contain any hope? Why and how is it given? How does this compare with the hope in chapters 1 and 2?

Finally, record themes for Isaiah 3 and 4 on ISAIAH AT A GLANCE.

## DAY SIX

Now we come to Isaiah 5—an incredible chapter. Read it, and in addition to the words on your bookmark, mark *people*, *exile*,<sup>3</sup> and *anger*.

Compare Hosea 4:1-6 with Isaiah 5:13. What is similar?

Are there any similarities between God's people in Isaiah's day and those who claim to know God today? Think of some examples. What effect should Isaiah's words have had on the people of his day? What effect do you think they would have today on the church? Do you hear messages like this very often today?

You might also have noticed the repetition of *woe* in Isaiah 5. What does this word draw attention to?

How is God going to bring judgment on Judah?

Don't forget to record a theme for Isaiah 5 on ISAIAH AT A GLANCE.




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 DAY SEVEN



Store in your heart: Isaiah 1:18

Read and discuss: Isaiah 1:1-4,10-20; 2:1-4,12-18;  
3:11-15; 4:1-6; 5:26-30

*QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY*

- ∞ Discuss the setting of Isaiah 1–5. What kings are reigning, and what do you know about the history of Judah?
- ∞ What do you know about the relationship between God and the nation of Israel from Exodus and Deuteronomy?
- ∞ How does this relate to the message of Isaiah 1–5?
- ∞ What is the general message of Isaiah 5? What is the problem in Israel?
- ∞ What message of hope is given in these chapters?
- ∞ What application can you make to your own life? Are you a child of God? What is your response to God’s forgiveness?
- ∞ How does this week’s study motivate you to share what you learned with others?

*THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK*

“The LORD arises to contend, and stands to judge the people,” Isaiah tells us in chapter 3, verse 13. His anger has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His

hand against them and struck them down. For all this His anger is not spent; His hand is still stretched out.

What shall we make of such hostile words? What is the relationship between God and Israel? Chapter 1 gives us a description:

Verse 2: Sons I have reared and brought up,  
But they have revolted against Me.

Verse 3: An ox knows its owner,  
And a donkey its master's manger  
But Israel does not know,  
My people do not understand...

Verse 4: Sons who act corruptly!  
They have abandoned the LORD,  
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
They have turned away from Him.

These give us some clues to the relationship. Verse 2 tells us about a father-son relationship. Verse 3 tells us about a master-servant relationship. Verse 4 tells us about both father-son and God-people relationships.

In Exodus 4:22-23, when God was sending Moses to Egypt to bring His people out of slavery, He told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, My firstborn... Let My son go that he may serve Me." So we see God acknowledging Israel as His son. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea all pick up this theme.

Exodus 34:23 introduces us to God as *Adonai*, the "Lord GOD, the God of Israel." Before that, the word *Adonai* is mostly translated as *master* and used of men. In Isaiah 5, Isaiah uses a metaphor of the vineyard and the owner. As Master, the owner of the vineyard, God expects good fruit.

We know from Exodus and Deuteronomy that Israel

entered into a covenant with God at Mount Sinai to be His people, and He would be their God. Deuteronomy 26:17-19, for example, establishes this relationship:

You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.

So what does God, this God who is Father and Master, expect from Israel?

All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:1-2).

Notice what God said about obedience and humility. Deuteronomy 8:19 adds that if Israel ever forgets God and serves and worships other gods, they will surely perish because they would not listen to the Lord their God. And in Isaiah, we find Israel in exactly that situation. They have gone

after other gods, to bow down and worship them, to serve them. So based on the relationship established in Exodus and Deuteronomy, God, the one who made the covenant, laid out clearly for His partner, Israel, what to expect if they broke the rules.

God, the Holy One of Israel, expects holy behavior from His sons, His children, His servants, His covenant partners. First Peter 1:14-16 quotes Leviticus 11:45: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” This is the standard to which God holds His people accountable. Because He is Holy, He can judge their holiness by His standard. And thus He has the right to judge righteously, as any father or master would.

So we know God has the authority to hold Israel accountable. This is the basis of the case He brings against Judah and Jerusalem in Isaiah. Remember, Judah and Jerusalem are simply what’s left in the land of Israel. Judah is the southern kingdom, and Jerusalem is its capital.

Now, how does any of this relate to you and me? Is there any parallel to our situation as the church?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His listeners that they have a Father in heaven. The Gospels echo this term throughout because Jesus’ audience in His earthly ministry was Jewish. But the term is clearly expanded to include the Gentiles.

According to John 1:12, we have the same God and Father that Israel does if we have believed in Jesus. And we have fellowship with Him.

The New Testament contains literally hundreds of references to Jesus as Lord, but perhaps none is better or more famous than Revelation 19:16: He is the “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

When God is done judging, purging, and restoring holiness, what will things be like? What can give New Testament

believers motivation and hope as we consider the results of judgment?

We have the hope of resurrection, the hope of a new body, the hope of eternal life, the hope of reward, the hope of the return of Jesus to rule and reign, the hope of a new heaven and a new earth, and the hope of just judgment of the living and the dead.