

# Isaiah in the gospels

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Preacher: Philip Wells and others

[0:00] My plan as it stands at the moment is half an hour or so to look at these passages to do this study and if we have another quarter of an hour in which our aim will be to pray.

So that's the idea. Can you remember the headings from this morning? Okay, you're excused. Headings were, the clue was the word big.

Big Saviors was one of it, yes. Big History was the first part, yes. Big History. Big Project, yes. The Big History was that Isaiah, although it's located in a particular piece of history, it looks all the way back to God creating everything and Abraham, whom God first chose and worked with and all of the family that came from him.

And it actually goes all the way forward to the time when death will be defeated. So it's Big History and the same thing was Big Project. Can anybody think of what was involved in the project?

Bringing people of different nations. Bringing people of different nations, yeah. That's good. And anything else as well as the different nations?

[1:19] Is there something about setting Jerusalem free? It certainly is to do with liberating Jerusalem from all her enemies. Yes, that's right.

Rebuilding the cosmos. Yeah, rebuilding the cosmos is the ultimate aim of it, yes. I think when I did the project bit, it was Isaiah 2, that the mountain of the Lord will be raised up. So it was this business of the prominence of God's kingdom.

The fact he's going to build a city. He's interested in building a community. The fact that it's the place where the Lord is, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be exalted.

So there's something about the fellowship of God with his people and the internationalism of it and the fact that it actually affects the whole cosmos. That's the project that God is doing.

This was what Christopher said, big saviors. Anybody remember the saviors that we come across in the book of Isaiah? The branch.

[2:28] The branch. The branch, yes, the branch. The suffering servant, yes. The other one, following Mr. Matea, was the anointed king, the conquering king.

So we have a number of different angles on what's actually the same person. So who is the suffering servant, the child who will be king, and the anointed conqueror?

It's Jesus, isn't it? Yeah, it's Jesus. It's all about Jesus. And it gives us a very big picture of who Jesus is. And the fourth thing was?

Big God. Yes, big God. There was a book published with the title, Your God is Too Small. I don't know about you, but I think this is my experience that left to oneself, one's view of God contracts. And we need the word of God to remind us again of how big God is. The whole of life tends to contract left to ourselves, doesn't it? But the big God.

[3:40] So that's what we looked at this morning. I'm glad you could remember that. You were in Sunday school. Understood. So let's just look again at the geography.

So Johannes said to me, he didn't understand that map because I hadn't put in which was the sea and which was the land, which is true. I think once you got it, you were okay. But if you didn't get it, then you would be stuck.

That's the Mediterranean. That isn't the Mediterranean. What's that one? That's not the Mediterranean either. That's the Mediterranean. That's Cyprus. So we're over here somewhere. This is Jerusalem. That's Egypt. And these two rivers are the Tigris and the Euphrates. And the geography said that it's to do with Jerusalem.

That's the center of God's purposes. But in relation to Egypt, which was the ancient captor of Israel. [4:43] They were slaves in Egypt, weren't they? And at the time of Isaiah's writing, we have Assyria, capital Nineveh.

Nineveh is somewhere over there. I think it's probably in that area, actually. And Assyria is a great big power which spreads right up to the borders of Jerusalem and actually manages to destroy the northern kingdom.

And then in view is the next big superpower which is Babylon, which is based in Babylon further south, somewhere around there, I think.

And they do actually defeat and bring into captivity, defeat Jerusalem, knock down the temple and take everybody captive.

That's the geography of it. And here I've got a rather baffling picture of the history.

[5:49] Now then, you have to look carefully at that. So let me, you don't need to know all of it. I don't think, I think we'd be very confused if we try and do all of it. But Israel had split into two kingdoms at this time.

Following King Solomon and the golden age of the kingdom, it split into two, the north and the south. The north is called Israel, the south is called Judah. And we have two royal lines which go down through history here.

This royal line ends in the Assyrian captivity. This royal line ends in the Babylonian captivity. So let's not bother with those kings because we're concentrating on Judah.

And it was in the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. So let's find them on here.

Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. They're the kings in whose reign Isaiah prophesied.

[6:54] And the maker of this chart, which wasn't me, I got it off the internet, puts Isaiah's ministry there, which he makes that 40 years.

I'm sure the book that I read made it more than that. But I suppose it depends when the exact start and finish are because we're not, I don't think we're quite told that. Is that, yes, and there's an overlapping reign here.

But that's the sort of time that Isaiah was prophesying, spanning those kings. Interestingly, this is color-coded by virtue.

Do you see this? The green is righteous and the red is evil. That's rather an interesting way to do a map. But you see Manasseh's reign was an evil reign.

And in the end, they came to the Babylonian captivity. Did I? Did I? Yeah, I think I did a zoom in on it there. So that was just to try and clarify the history and geography.

[7:57] I won't keep on doing that every time, but I think it's good to try and have that in our minds. What I thought we would look at, click, is this.

So they've got several things going on there. First thing is it would be nice if we all read the book of Isaiah. Would you like to read the book of Isaiah? I think it would be really helpful.

We don't have, even if we did in church one chapter each week, it would be more than a year. So I think we've got to all work together on this and do some homework.

If you, there are 66 chapters. If you read three per day, just tell me, I think my maths is about right, isn't it? If we read three chapters a day, we could read the whole thing in three weeks.

Is that right? 21 days? Yeah. Would you like to do that? Would you like to do it more slowly? It'd be nice if in three weeks' time we could all say, we actually have all read it through.

[9:06] I'm not saying we've read it through in great detail and understood every bit of it, but we have read it all through. Would we like to do that?

Christopher would, yes. Okay, why don't we say together, we'll do that, we'll read it through. Next thing on there, Isaiah is directly quoted, I think it's 66 times in the New Testament.

So I'm doing, I'm looking at this cheese again and thinking, what does the New Testament make of this, this big cheese of Isaiah's book?

So the 66 quotes, I thought we would spend the next 20 minutes or so, looking at some of them and asking, who does the quoting?

And what does Isaiah say in the bit that's quoted? And what does the quoter say, the person doing the quoting, say that this is to do with when he quotes it?

[10:19] And then, a final question, what, if anything, do we learn from that or what do we take away from it? So I think that's a modern expression.

What's the takeaway from this? What do we, what's the, how does that impact us? So that's what I thought we could spend time doing.

Not all 66 references, but just the ones from Mark's gospel, with the thought that that Mark's gospel might be reasonably familiar to most of us.

So what I've got here, and I hope I've done it accurately, is Mark chapter 1 verse 2 quotes Isaiah 40 verse 3. Mark 4 verse 12 quotes Isaiah 6 verse 9.

Mark 7 verse 6 quotes Isaiah 29, 13, and so on. Okay, get the thought of that. And what I suggest, I said it would be a discussion, so what I really meant was it would be a group activity with some discussion.

[11:25] Could we divide up into group 4 and work through those and be ready in sort of 15 or 20 minutes to share with everybody what we have learned?

And my thought was that if you're a group over here, let's call you group A, there might be one or two groups of group A, if you start with those, start there and work down, at least you'll have looked at those.

If you're in the middle, if you're a group in the middle, let's say that you do B, so you start there and work on. You might do all of them or you might just get one or two. And if you're a group over there, you can be, you start with C, which is here.

So if we did it that way, we will all have looked at all of those, although we might not each have looked at each individual one, if you see what I mean. Shall we do that?

So groups of four, looking at those, the questions are, who is doing the quoting? What was Isaiah saying? What does the quota say? What do we learn from it? Okay, shall we do that?

[12:36] Go on, there you are. Tell us one thing that you learned. Which bit did you do and what did you do? Okay, so we did Mark 11, 17, where it talks about my house.

It's the, it's where Jesus goes into the temple and turns over the tables and quotes Isaiah where he says, my house will, is a house of prayer and not to be used as, I can't remember the exact wording, as a den of robbers.

For, yes, for all nations as well. So, what we got from that is that the Jews had kind of lost the original intent of what Isaiah had prophesied about what the temple was for.

that they turned it into a place for commerce and they were being exclusive. There was a sense that the Gentiles were being kept out and actually, when you look in Isaiah, that's not God's heart and there's a sense that, and Christ is bringing them back to the original intent of what the Isaiah prophesied.

so, my house, we thought God speaking directly through Isaiah the prophet and we also reflected on how seriously Christ takes worship and it's not for us to just make up how we conduct religious services and so forth.

[14:10] There's a sense in which there's, you know. So, you think selling animals and doing currency exchange is not included in New Testament worship?

No, well, yes, so that's the main thing that we got from there really and Christopher talked about that there's something in Mark which alludes to Christ's deity although he doesn't directly say this is me, I'm God but there's an authority in which he's speaking which by what authority do you do these things and he takes that authority doesn't he?

Yeah, because the Pharisees became so perplexed after, you know, and there's something of, I don't know, there's something of judgment there as well, isn't there?

Oh, there is. Yes, in the end the whole earthly temple system gets obsoleted in favor of New Testament Christ, worship through Christ.

So, thank you for that. Did you find it a stimulating conversation together? Excellent, good. I think it's the connection, it's really enthralling, isn't it, when you can see how in the old it's being fulfilled in the new and you can see how the Bible isn't just disparate bits, that actually these prophecies really come to life in Christ and it's exciting, yeah.

[15:45] Yeah, super, good. And pass on to the next group and they could tell us, so Roger, what did you do? Well, we were under the letter B, so the first quote we looked at is the one in Mark chapter 7 verse 6 and again, Jesus is quoting Isaiah and so what we learnt about that is that Jesus knew his scriptures absolutely and that what Isaiah prophesied in his time was the case when was fulfilled when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees in this situation.

So we learned also that if people are following rules only and thinking that that's what worship should be, then it's as Isaiah said that they worship me in vain.

Not me, but God. So it's vain because the teachings are but rules taught by men.

So Jesus was saying that of the people he was talking to. Yes. And then he underlines it in verse 8, the next verse, in Mark, you have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.

Yeah. Yeah, thank you very much. That's that principle. Non-conformist churches would make a lot of that idea that we shouldn't be having traditions of men, but everything should be ruled by God's word.

[17:47] So that's why non-conformist churches are a little bit cautious about the church's year and all that sort of stuff because in a way it's a tradition of men.

Yeah, but that text would be worth a lot of thought because it actually tells us about sin, doesn't it? Sin, when we think, these people thought they were being very holy, but actually they were mistaken on quite a basic level.

So thank you for that. Thank you for that, Roger. Sorry? I'm going to just stick to one because otherwise we won't get time for everybody to have a go. So thank you very much for that.

Did you enjoy your discussion? We did. I think we were able to build together on the different bit that Isaiah brought and then how Jesus emphasised it.

Thank you very much. Could we pass on to the next group? We did Mark 9, 48 and 66, 24, which is about their worm does not die, their fire will not be quenched.

[19:08] and it's talking about eternal life and the stumbling blocks, no, not stumbling blocks, the connection between the prophecy of destruction and also and the heaven and eternal city and the consequences of their actions.

Being the worm that doesn't die, being the body and the soul and stuff like that. It was complicated. Did you have a view on what Isaiah had in mind when he talked about worms not dying and fire not being quenched?

Did you have any idea of what he's referring to in his own context? That was his destruction. Destruction. Eternal destruction.

Destruction, what, like in a... The eternal destruction of our souls. By execution, by being chopped up, what sort of destruction does he have in mind?

I think it's probably the aftermath of a battle, but we thought the point was that the destruction goes on forever. Normally, the worm would eat the body and the fire would die out, but in this case, it doesn't.

[20:37] It goes on forever. I think what Corwin was saying was in Revelation, at the end of Revelation, there are only two places. There's the holy city, which encompasses the whole cosmos, and the only other place is the burning pit.

That's kind of where Isaiah is heading. Thank you very much. That's quite solemn, isn't it? heaven and hell in those verses.

Thank you. We'll come to the next group, if we may. I think we can't really add much more to what we've been saying.

We're on B, yeah, and a little bit of C, but not very much, I think. Semma felt that the worm that does not die, and the fire is not quenched, when it goes on afterwards to talk about being salted with fire, and things like that, it goes on afterwards, not in Isaiah, but in the gospel, And Arsema sort of, well, I thought it was interesting, said, you know, that sometimes, you know, when we are salted with fire, you know, sometimes we can, this is more of a spiritual context, we can hold on to things

that maybe, you know, we don't let go of.

And that's also a kind of worm that doesn't die, you know, a sort of a sin or something that is not chuffed away.

[22:21] And so it can perpetuate and keep us in a horrible place because we're sort of rebelling in a way because we're not addressing it.

So I thought that was quite interesting. Okay, so that's a sort of indwelling sin kind of thing. Yes, because we still have indwelling sin until we get to glory, there's indwelling sin.

We keep fighting it. It is a bit like if we're salted with fire and, you know, we have this sexual fear that we're just not letting go of it or something, it can be a little bit like a fire time and ongoing, never having any relief from it.

Interesting thought. Thank you for that. Other than the first one, I think the drawing near to God with the heart rather than that. Sorry, say this again. Drawing near to God with the heart rather than our big mouths and our lips, yeah.

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Empty words. Yes, the heart, the importance of that, yep. So we did Mark 4, verse 12.

[23:23] Quoted from Isaiah 6, wasn't it?

It's quite tricky actually to understand this fully. It seems to be the case that when a servant of God, in the Old Testament Isaiah, in this case Jesus, preaches the word of God to people, there will be those for whom this is a hardening process and an indictment and a judgment.

And the word of God will not shed any light at all on their understanding or lack of understanding. It will actually darken them even more and harden them. Yeah.

It's quite sobering. It is. I think it links with the one that Roger had, that the Pharisees, who had the word of God, would have said, well, we're very holy. We've got the whole point of this.

But actually, they were as hard as hard as could be and ended up crucifying Jesus. It's the same sort of pattern, isn't it? Yeah. Thank you very much.

[24:27] It looks like I've been voting. Tell us about the first one, if you would, Ben. Well, we did the first two. I think the first one deals with an early reference to the coming of the Lord.

Yes. The Lord being who? The Lord being, first of all, God. Yes. But also, indirect, the Lord and Jesus are basically the same entity.

Yes. There's a reference to Jesus talking in parables. Yes. Which obviously comes up frequently throughout the Bible. And, yeah, it's just really a reference to the coming of the Lord.

It states about the leveling of the hills and the mountains and the rising of the plains. So, it's basically dealing with the coming of the Lord and Jesus.

Yeah. Thank you. Because we were working on that together. And you get this immense surprise that the Isaiah passage is about the coming of Yahweh, coming of the Lord, the God of Israel.

[25:39] And it's built up. And it's built up. And we have John the Baptist who says the things that Isaiah speaks about. And here comes Jesus. And it's really remarkable.

The text says the Lord is coming. You'll see the glory of the Lord. And there's Jesus. Jesus. Which is just a remarkable, remarkable thing. I'm pretty hopeless at allocating time, aren't I?

Did you enjoy looking at those texts? It's a good exercise, isn't it? Have you got patience to spend until 8 o'clock in your same group bringing that back to the Lord in prayer?

It might be just very, very quick prayers. And if there's anything that anybody particularly wants to pray about, say it very quickly. Pray together just for a few more minutes.

And then we... Thank you.