

# Isaiah Challenges Jews

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, we know that this prophet Isaiah was a quite remarkable prophet, not least of all for his literary genius. Probably the greatest, the most beautiful writing that is found anywhere in Hebrew is found in the prophecy of Isaiah.

The language really is quite magnificent. And even through its translation, when you read through the prophecy, some of the phrases, some of the concepts, some of what is said is really quite magnificent.

But it's not for the magnificence of the language that Isaiah is so loved as for the way that through his message he brings God, the Lord, very close to us.

That's one of the things that always strikes you when you read through Isaiah's prophecies.

Whether it is God being spoken of with regard to his judgments, or whether it is God being spoken of with regard to his promises, and to many of the most comforting, beautiful passages that you find anywhere in the Bible.

The way that the message is conveyed, there seems to be a power and a reality, and God seems to come close in the very pages of Scripture as you read through the writings of this prophet.

[ 1 : 38 ] But above all that, probably why Isaiah is highlighted so often, are his amazing prophecies regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. No prophet in the Old Testament spoke more about Jesus than the prophet Isaiah.

And for instance, the likes of Isaiah chapter 53 is so graphic that you would almost believe that Isaiah had lived to see the life of Jesus.

Because his description of so many of the things regarding Jesus' life in this world are highlighted in the end of chapter 52 and on through chapter 53.

So he's really a quite remarkable prophet. He also prophesied for a long, long time. He tells us that he began in the year that King Uzziah died.

And Isaiah went through several reigns because he was through the reign of Jotham and of Ahas and of Hezekiah and laterally of Manasseh.

[ 2 : 50 ] But he was also at the very end of Uzziah's reign. We're told that he was the son of Amos. We're told that at the beginning of the prophecy.

And Jewish tradition tells us that this Amos was indeed a brother of Amaziah who was one of the kings of Judah.

And if that is the case, then Isaiah was of royal blood. So that's a lot of the Jewish tradition that we have.

Of course, it's not in the Bible, but through the writings that are around that time, that's what we're told. He saw many changes in his time, not least through the reign of Hezekiah, because Hezekiah was the best king that Judah ever had.

And I'm sure the heart of Isaiah must have rejoiced during that period because Hezekiah reformed so much of the land. He overthrew so much of the idolatry and so much that was wrong.

[ 4 : 01 ] And he established the rule of God within the kingdom. So there must have been great rejoicing in the heart of Isaiah when he saw the way Hezekiah gave himself with a zeal and a passion to the establishing of the rule of God within the land.

But remarkably, the most, and we're told that Hezekiah was the godliest, the best king that Judah, we've got to remember, we're not talking about the likes of David, because remember how Israel and Judah separated, how it was all one nation.

And in the time of Solomon's son, there was a breakup between, with Rehoboam and Jeroboam, where Israel divided and a large section followed, well, a small section, Judah, followed Solomon's line, Rehoboam, and the others followed Jeroboam.

So there was a division. But with regard to Judah, Hezekiah was the best king that they ever had. But his son Manasseh was the worst. And when Manasseh came to power, he tried to obliterate everything that his father had done.

And he tried to remove the very name of God out of the land. And he made the streets of Jerusalem run red with the blood of the saints. As he persecuted and as he killed, he even sacrificed his own children in idol worship.

[ 5 : 32 ] And again, Jewish tradition tells us that it was during the reign of Manasseh that Isaiah was martyred. And we're told again from Jewish tradition in the writings there that he was actually sawn in two.

He was sawn asunder. In Hebrews chapter 11, in that chapter about men and women of faith, it talks about the difficult things that many Christians go through.

And one of them is being sawn in two. I cannot think of a much more awful way of being put to death. So that actually happened to some of the believers that they were sawn in two.

And tradition, again, the writings, Jewish writings tell us that that is how in Manasseh's reign that Isaiah was martyred.

But anyway, Isaiah is here prophesying and he's speaking to the Jews. And we see that although there is threatening calamity around, we find that things are difficult as far as the Jewish people are concerned.

[ 6 : 43 ] And they have a problem. Because we read there in chapter 58, a wee bit there, that they were fasting and they were praying.

In chapter 58 there, they were going through all the sort of ways. It tells us at the beginning, You seek me daily. You delight to know my ways. As if they were a nation that did righteousness.

And did not forsake the judgment of their God. They ask of me righteous judgment. They delight to draw near to God. Now when you read that, you'd say to yourself, Well, all is well.

That's great. Here are our people who delight to know the ways of God. They're asking God of his righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God.

So you say to yourself, Well, the situation is really good, but it's not. Because the Jews ask the question then in verse 3, Why have we fasted and you see it not?

[ 7 : 45 ] Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it? So they're asking this question as to why things are the way they are.

But it's very obvious if we had read through, Continue to read through chapter 58. And certainly as we read through chapter 59, We see that everything is not as it appears.

Outwardly, the Jews are going through all emotions. They're drawing near to God where there are sacrifices. They are saying the right words. They're saying to the Lord, Lord, we want to know your ways.

But it's very obvious when you read through the chapter That they have no intention, whatever, Of doing what God requires.

So that it becomes very clear as you read this, That everything they were doing was just a kind of formality. They were going through duties. But their heart was far away.

[ 8 : 46 ] They had no real desire for God. They were only interested in themselves. Even when they were fasting, They were seeking their own pleasure. And we notice that the Lord is not listening to them.

And I find that this is a very challenging, Very humbling. Because it shows us that we can go through all the right duties. We can dot all the I's and we can stroke the T's.

We can appear to be right. We can have everything at one level And appear everything correct.

And yet our heart is not in it. And the one thing and the one person we cannot deceive is the Lord.

We can say all the right things. We can do all the right things. But if our heart is not right, If we're simply going through formalities, If we're only just doing duties for the sake of it, And yet inwardly, We have no interest really in it.

God sees that. He knows. He knows who we are. He knows what we're about. And so that was what was happening in the land at that particular time. There was an outward performance of the duties, But they were dead.

[ 9 : 55 ] They were absolutely dead. They really had no interest in God at all. And it's actually a very solemn and a sad thing. Do you know what God much prefers?

He far prefers that we would come with all our sin. And with our way, We're coming to Him with all brokenness. And say, Lord, Lord, My life's a mess.

I have done so many things that are wrong. I don't know how I can come into Your presence. But Lord, Have mercy upon me. That's what God wants. Far more than people coming and appearing to be everything all right.

We're told in the Psalms that a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice. So if we come with a brokenness that comes through our own failure, our own sin, There has to be an owning up as to who we are and what we are.

The one person we cannot deceive is the Lord. And that was the problem at that particular time. The people were like the Pharisees in the time of Jesus.

[11:05] They weren't like the publican. Remember the publican? He was in the corner. Couldn't even lift up his head. He felt so ashamed of what he was. All he could say to the Lord was, Oh Lord, I'll be merciful to me, a sinner.

On the other hand, The Pharisee was telling the Lord how good he was. Telling him about all the things that he did. And thanking God that he wasn't like the publican over in the corner. Both men left the temple.

One left justified. Forgiven. Pardoned. It wasn't the Pharisee. It was the publican. The broken one. The one who couldn't lift up his head. So we've always got to see That God sees us as we really are.

And that is why it is so important That we deal honestly With what we are And who we are. And so we find that Isaiah is here challenging the Jews Who are complaining that the Lord is not listening. And so he says here, Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened That it cannot save. Or his ear dull That it cannot hear. Now again, When we see that It almost is a contradiction.

[12:14] Because we're told in scripture That the Lord is somebody Who hears and answers prayer. For instance, In chapter 58 And verse 9 Then you shall call And the Lord will answer.

You shall cry And he will say Here I am. That's what we were taught From the time I'm sure most of us If we were brought up In the Christian faith We were taught That the Lord Is somebody who hears And answers prayer.

We were taught To believe That God hears And answers prayer. And that when we come to the Lord We must have faith To believe. We're told in scripture That he is a rewarder Of those who diligently seek him.

And again When we go through The Bible We're told Not just in the Old Testament But in the New Testament Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it shall be opened.

You go through the Bible And you will see Many of the prayers Of God's people. People like Abraham And Jacob And Joseph And Daniel And David And Gideon And all these people.

[13:22] Elijah You will see them Praying to the Lord And the Lord Answering their prayers. So we're taught That God is a prayer hearing And a prayer answering God.

You go through the Bible And so often In answer to prayer You'll see for instance Like the Red Sea Was parted Because of prayer. You will see the Lord Sending fire from heaven In answer to prayer. The Lord sending bread From heaven In answer to prayer. You could You could make out You could spend all night Filling out pages Of how God Has answered prayer In the most Wonderful way.

And yet When we come here We see That there's something wrong. So Isaiah Says to them Behold And whenever you find This word behold It's there To grab our attention.

Say right Look This is what He's really saying Right Look here Pay attention God is speaking to you Sit up And take notice. And the prophet Is using language Of God In order To get them To understand.

[14:28] Now we know That God does not God is a spirit. God does not have Hands and arms And ears Like we do. Although we know That when God Emmanuel When God came In the flesh When the second person Of the Godhead Christ Came into this world He took human nature And he became A man In all the fullness And the ordinariness Of human flesh.

But that's not What has been spoken About here. But Isaiah Is using language To enable us To understand God's reaction And God's attitude To his people.

And it's as if God All of a sudden His arm Which has always Been outstretched To his people And for his people Has become short. It's as if He can't reach them. As if the arm All of a sudden Has

shortened.

Beforehand It was just long enough And there he could reach And he could do And he could deal. But now all of a sudden He can't reach them. And it's as if His ear had become deaf. As if he had become Hard of hearing.

They're crying to him But he's not listening. He's not hearing. And so there's This great problem. What is the problem? Well Isaiah Highlights the problem Very clearly In verse 2.

[ 15 : 50 ] Your iniquities Have made a separation Between you and your God And your sins Have hidden his face From you. Sin is the great barrier The great separator Between ourselves And God.

It was so At the very beginning From the very start And it hasn't changed Even although We're now living In the 21st century. Let us not For one moment Think that Because we have Become more enlightened And because We've so progressed In all areas of life Say in technology And all these things And in science And that we can Do so many wonderful things God hasn't changed And he's exactly And he's exactly The same today As he always was And he has always Said to us The great barrier Between you and me Is sin That of course Is why he sent His son Into the world To deal With a barrier That we couldn't deal with We'll see that In a moment But we're told here That our iniquities Have separated Your iniquities Have made a separation Iniquity really means Crooked Twisted Perversion And the iniquity Talks more of What's inside us What we are By nature Now a lot of people This is why A lot of people Actually don't like The Bible Because people Will say How dare How dare Anybody say to me That I am crooked That I am twisted That I am perverse Do you mean to tell me That that's what God Is saying About me About my life About my Exactly That's what God Is saying Because by nature There is a twistedness And a perverse And a crookedness Within us That's why the Bible Says That the heart The inner being Is deceitful Above all things And desperately Wicked In other words There is nothing In this life More twisted And deceitful Than the very depth Of our own being Now that sometimes Comes as a shock To us And that's why

We need to ask The Lord To help us To see How we really Are To see that By nature We are not Right with him Even although We may think We are That we are Not And you know The Bible Also says As a man Or as a person Thinks In their heart So is that So is he As I'm Putting it As I said In the avi As a man Thinketh In his heart So is he As a person Thinks As a person Is Right down Deep in there That's what The passion Really is I find that A real challenge The real you And me Is not what We see Just outwardly Not how we Interact with One another Not even how We might be At home The real me Is what is Deep down What am I Thinking about All day long What is my Thought Pattern like What What am I Thinking Do you ever Find yourself Saying to Yourself Oh my When you When you Stop And really Think about Your thoughts Sometimes the Evil The twistedness There's Everything Every There's murder And lying And deceit And stealing And adulterous And blasphemy Everything Don't kid Yourselfs That we're not Like that It's all In there As a person Thinks in his Heart So is that Person And then it Talks about Sin Now of course We know Sin is missing The mark And sin is Coming short Of the glory Of God That's what we Need Man's chief End is to Glorify God And to enjoy Him forever God requires That we live To glorify Him None of us None of us Meet the mark

[ 20 : 09 ] What happened In Eden Broke it So that all The time We're coming Short We're missing We're missing We're missing So the Condition is Bad Behold the Lord's hand Is not Shortened That it Cannot save Or his Ear dull That it Cannot hear But your Iniquities Have made A separation Between you And your God And your Sins Have hidden His face From you So that he Does not Hear That's Challenging But then we See Just look I'm not going To go through All that it Says But we see Something of What it Says Because there's A catalogue Of the National sins This is how The nation What Here are the People On the one Hand They're drawing Near to God They're kidding On that Everything is Right Oh we're Good We're Worshipping God But the Lord says I'm going To tell you How it Is And there's A huge List of Social sins Now I think This is important For us to Understand Because we Often think We categorize

Sin and we Say oh well I'll tell you What sin Is In prophecies God's judgment Comes upon His people I would say First of all For idolatry But secondly For the Catalogue of Social sins For injustice For oppression These are Things that God Cannot Tolerate They are An abomination In his Side And these Are things Often we Just We push Aside And we Don't Think Maybe That's Not a Big Deal Well Just Look at What it Says Here In verse Three Hands Defiled With Blood Fingers With Iniquity See How Society Was Wasn't Safe To walk The Streets Knifings Muggings People

Being Beaten Up That's Really What It's Saying There Was An Amazing Amount Of Violence Within The Communities Then it

Goes On Your Lips Have Spoken Lies Your Tongue Mutters Wickedness Nobody Could Be Believed You See Even In Places Of Authority It Speaks About That Further On That You Know How They Made The Roads Crooked And All These Kind Of Things That Even In The Market Places Or In The Center Places That There Was No Justice Or Anything At All Like That Lies Were The Order Of The Day From Government Down Into The Communities Down Into Amongst The Church In Homes There's No Truth As Always And Today You Know People People Lie As If It's Ordinary You Find That In Places Of Government Places Of Authority People Call It Spin There's No Such Thing As Spin It's Either Truth Or It's Lies

It's Either Or And God Demands God Demands Truth Especially Of His People Because You Got To Remember The Father Of Lies Is The Devil And If We Lie If We Try And Deceive People If We Try And Wrong Track People If We Try And Lead People Down Our Wrong We're Following The Devil We're We're Imitating The Devil Jesus Is Truth Jesus Says I Am Truth So You See It's A Very Very Serious Thing If From Government All The Way Down That It's Nothing But Lies And Injustice And Untruth And That Was The Problem That Was One Of The Reasons Why God Wouldn't Listen Why He Wasn't Answering From Heaven Because Of These Things We See There's No Justice In Verse Four No One Enters Justly No One Goes To Law Honesty It's An Awful State Where People Can Be Bought Where You Don't Know If You Go To Court Whether It'll Be Right Or Whether It'll Be Wrong Feet Run To Do Evil There's Just This Urgency To Go In The Wrong Way See Verse Eight The Way Of Peace They Do Not Know And There Is No Peace There's The Picture Really Is Awful And There's A Nation Without Peace Is In An Awful State Peace Is One Of The Greatest Blessings That We Can Have In Life And It Is One Of The Things That We Ought To Be Promoting A Christian Ought Always To Be Seeking To Promote Peace A Person Who Isn't Seeking To Promote Peace There's A Question Mark Over Their Life Somebody Says I Love Confrontation I Love Causing Division Then There's Something Wrong With That Person Again That

[ 25 : 13 ] Person Is Not Mirroring Jesus Christ Because Jesus Christ Is A Prince Of Peace And When Jesus Comes To Rule And To Reign In A Person's Life One Of The First Things He Does Is He Brings Peace Blessed Are The Peacemakers For They Shall Be Called The Children Of God Now There's Many Things That We Could Say With Regarding This But The Time Is Going But You'll Notice The One Thing That Happens The Lord Saw It And It Displeased Him That There Was No Just He Saw That There Was No One No Man And Wondered That There Was No One To Intercede Then His Own Arm Brought Him Salvation I Love That Here's The Helplessness Of The People Side He's In A Mess And The Lord Looks Down And There's No They Cannot Get Themselves Out Of The Mess But The Lord He

Intercedes And His Arm Brings Salvation That's How It Was From The Very Beginning The Moment Adam And Eve Fell They Were Gone There Was Nobody Who Could Bring Them Salvation Nobody Amongst They Couldn't Themselves Only God Could He Intervened He Came And He Did For Them What They Couldn't Do And In Doing For Them He Set Up For Us A Way Where His Arm Has Brought Salvation And What He Has Done In The Past He Is Still Able To Do Today And He's Continuing To Do It And That My Friends Is Our Only Hope And As We Look Out Nationally And As We Look In At Ourselves We Have To Face Up To These Things And You Know Sometimes When We Look Out As An Asian Now I Know We Have Many Great Things But We're Also Nationally In A Bad Way Spiritually We're Bankrupt

But We've Got To Face Up To It There's No Point In Saying Because It's The Easiest Thing To Say Oh Look At Our Governments Look At Look At What They're Doing Everything They're Moving Further And Further Away From God The Word Of God Is Being Pushed Out There's No Hope For Us What Are We Going To Do Well The Lord Has Said Very Clearly That The Responsibility Lies With His Own People And He Says If My People Who Are Called By My Name If They Will Turn From Their Evil Ways And If They Will Repent And If They Will Seek My He Said I Will Hear From Heaven And He Goes On To Say That He Will Heal The Land Doesn't Say If The Politicians Do This Or Do Certain Things He Says My People So You See There Is An Incredible Responsibility Put Upon The People Of God And So We Have To Face Up To This And Not Just Nationally But We Begin With Ourselves

You Know The Easiest Thing To Do Is To Point The Finger At Politicians And Point The Fingers At Other People And Say Oh Look At Look At What They're Doing The Lord Says But What Are You Doing One Of The Most Wonderful Men Ever Shown Us In The Bible Is Daniel He Was Called God Called Him The Beloved He Was Beloved Of God And When We Find Daniel Praying For The Nation Daniel Doesn't Say Oh Lord They Have Sinned But He Says No We Have Sinned He Included Himself In It He Began With Himself He Saw Himself Yes This Amazing Man So Holy And Yet He Saw Himself Such A Sinner And As Part Of The Problem And Unless We See Ourselves As Part Of The Problem Then We Will Never Pray Right Before God We Must Acknowledge And Accept Our Own Sin And Our Own Responsibility And We Believe That The Lord When We Do That Will Hear And That He Will Send Out Or Stretch Out His Arm And He Will Bring Deliverance And He Will Intercede That Arm As We Sang About In Psalm 89 Thou Hast An Arm That Is Full Of Power Thy Hand Is Great In Might May We Know That Hand Stretched Out To Us Tonight Let Us Pray Lord Our God We We Pray That You Will Bless Us We We We Give We Give Thanks To We May We May Not Want To Hear Because They're Not Comfortable To Us But We Pray That It May Bring Us To Face Up To Who We Are And What We Are And We Ask Oh Lord To Forgive Us All

[ 30 : 15 ] Our Sin Be Merciful To Us We Pray We Pray For All Our Leaders For Those In Authority At Westminster And In Holyrood And Locally Here In The Council We Pray Lord To Grant Them Wisdom And That They Will Have Your Fear In Their Heart Watch Over Us We Pray And Take Us To Our Home Safely Do Us Good And Cleanse Us From Our Sin In Jesus Name We Ask All Amen We're Going to conclude Our service singing to God's Praise in Psalm 107 from the Scottish Psalter Psalm 107 from the Scottish Psalter we're going to sing verses 12 to 16 and the tune is Newington and you will find that on page 383 verse 12 Their heart he didn't break down with grief they fell no help could have in trouble then they cried to

God he them from straits did save he out of darkness did them bring and from death shade them take these bands wherewith they had been bound asunder quite he break oh that men to the Lord would give praise for his goodness then for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men because the mighty gates of brass and pieces by him and sundar also cut the barge of iron where these verses 12 to 16 page 383 Psalm 107 the tune is Newington their heart he did bring down with grief they fell no help could have in trouble when they cry to

God in them come still to see he out of darkness did them bring and from their children day they found wherewith they had been burned asunder quite he prayed oh that lent you the Lord who is praised for his goodness then and for his works all wonder done unto the sons of men because the mighty gave so proud their pieces he did here by him in thunder also cut the bars of iron wells now may the grace mercy and peace of God the Father

Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more amen please pray and amen amen to be ah