

A

SIMPLE GUIDE
TO

the Book of
Isaiah

How Isaiah Enlightens Our Understanding of End Times

Jeff Scoggins
Skapto Publishing
Boonsboro, Maryland

Copyright © 2017 Jeff Scoggins

Published by
Skapto Publishing
19414 Manor Church Road
Boonsboro, MD 21713

For more resources by this author visit www.Skapto.org

Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise marked. The HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION[®]. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version[®]. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible* (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-9889914-7-7

E-book ISBN 978-0-9889914-3-9

Other books by Jeff Scoggins

You Can Understand the Book of Revelation: A Clear Guide to Interpreting Prophecy (2013)

A Simple Guide to Paul's Epistles (2015)

A Simple Guide to the Book of Revelation (2018)

Visit www.Skapto.org to view a purchase these titles.

Abbreviations

ESV—English Standard Version

KJV—King James Version

NASB—New American Standard Bible

NET—New English Translation

NIV—New International Version 1984

NRSV—New Revised Standard Version

YLT—Young's Literal Translation

Contents

Preface	1	Isaiah 35	124
Isaiah 1	5	Isaiah 36	126
Isaiah 2	8	Isaiah 37	129
Isaiah 3	11	Isaiah 38	134
Isaiah 4	15	Isaiah 39	137
Isaiah 5	17	Isaiah 40	139
Isaiah 6	21	Isaiah 41	144
Isaiah 7	24	Isaiah 42	148
Isaiah 8	27	Isaiah 43	153
Isaiah 9	31	Isaiah 44	158
Isaiah 10	35	Isaiah 45	162
Isaiah 11	38	Isaiah 46	166
Isaiah 12	41	Isaiah 47	168
Isaiah 13	42	Isaiah 48	172
Isaiah 14	46	Isaiah 49	175
Isaiah 15	51	Isaiah 50	180
Isaiah 16	53	Isaiah 51	183
Isaiah 17	56	Isaiah 52	188
Isaiah 18	59	Isaiah 53	191
Isaiah 19	61	Isaiah 54	195
Isaiah 20	65	Isaiah 55	198
Isaiah 21	67	Isaiah 56	201
Isaiah 22	71	Isaiah 57	204
Isaiah 23	76	Isaiah 58	208
Isaiah 24	80	Isaiah 59	211
Isaiah 25	83	Isaiah 60	214
Isaiah 26	85	Isaiah 61	219
Isaiah 27	88	Isaiah 62	224
Isaiah 28	90	Isaiah 63	227
Isaiah 29	96	Isaiah 64	232
Isaiah 30	101	Isaiah 65	235
Isaiah 31	107	Isaiah 66	242
Isaiah 32	110	Afterword	248
Isaiah 33	114	Bibliography	249
Isaiah 34	120	Scripture Index	250

Preface

This devotional guide to the book of Isaiah has an unusual focus. Instead of concentrating primarily on the situation of Isaiah's time, this book concentrates on how the book of Isaiah informs our understanding of the book of Revelation. Many of the prophecies of Isaiah are dual prophecies, meaning that they apply not only to Isaiah's day but to the future as well. This means that Isaiah is more than merely a historical account; it is prophecy for today.

Most of us are completely missing large amounts of below-the-surface information in the book of Revelation because we are not intimately familiar with the Old Testament. Revelation is written in code, and what many do not realize is that the keys to the code are found in the Old Testament. Bible scholars know it, but the rest of us are still learning that the more we are familiar with the Old Testament the better we understand the book of Revelation. Fairytales make a good illustration. In North America you could say to most anyone, "What big ears you have!" and immediately that person would recall the story of Little Red Riding Hood. But if you said those words to the chief of a remote Amazon tribe in his own language, even though he would understand the words, he would not understand the allusion to the fairytale because he has never heard the story.

That is the situation when we read the book of Revelation and, to some degree, when we read any of the Old Testament prophets today. We understand the words but we miss most of what is happening beneath the surface because we do not know the allusions the way they did back then. Therefore, we are handicapped when we try to interpret the symbols.

That is why I have begun to work at knowing the Old Testament better, paying attention not only to the stories and poetry and prophecies in general, but paying attention to the particular words that are used to tell the stories. Hundreds and perhaps even thousands of times in the book of Revelation, John uses a word or a phrase that caused his people to recall an entire context from Isaiah or another Old Testament prophet. I want that same ability to understand, so I am slowly going through the Old Testament attempting to identify words and phrases that Revelation uses significantly. And this is what I have done with the book of Isaiah.

Dealing with Tenses

The fact that many of Isaiah's prophecies have a dual application presents a challenge to writing about them because it means that often in his book the past, present, and future are all in view at the same time. So which tense does one use to describe the text? For me it turned out to be an impossible task. Therefore, in commenting on each verse, if a pattern can be determined at all, I made the vague attempt to use past tense for passages that seem to have a primarily historical application. I used the present tense in current applications to the prophecy, even when a historical application is also possible. I used the future tense for eschatological applications even when past and present applications are also possible.

Understanding Israel

Some of what I describe in these pages really needs further explanation, for those who are not intimately familiar with the grand plot and the symbolism of Revelation. For that I recommend my books *You Can Understand the Book of Revelation* and *A Simple Guide to the Book of Revelation*. It might even be helpful to read those books first before reading this one.

An example of one of the concepts that I do not fully explain in this book but I deal with at length in the books mentioned above, concerns how we should understand the nation of Israel in prophecy, particularly when reading Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets from an eschatological viewpoint. In Bible prophecy, Israel has two levels. One level is the literal nation of Israel in Isaiah's day. The other level is the spiritual nation of Israel, which Jesus Christ has expanded to include not only those who accept Him in national Israel but in the Gentile nations as well.

It is fascinating to study the way that Jesus' life purposely paralleled the life of Israel in order that He might become the new Israel. On top of that, the history of the Christian church also parallels the life of Jesus and Israel. The bottom line is that when you read the prophecies and encounter Israel in an eschatological sense, in nearly every case if not every case, we must understand that the name of Israel refers not only to the literal nation of Israel but Christ and His church as well.

How to Use This Book

This is not so much a read-through book as it is a study book. If you read this book all by itself in order to learn more about Isaiah, you may soon be scratching your head in confusion. This book is best studied side

by side with two Bibles, one open to Isaiah and the other to Revelation. That way, when you read a passage of Isaiah, you can then read the comments in this book and, when Isaiah's prophecies relate to Revelation, you can compare that quickly and easily. This is why you will find so many references to Revelation in the course of reading. Each instance is a situation where Revelation may allude to a particular passage of Isaiah and, therefore, Isaiah can help inform our understanding of Revelation.

It will be helpful also to keep my book *A Simple Guide to Revelation* close by for fuller explanation of concepts you encounter in this book that are new to you.

If you are studying Revelation specifically and wish to easily locate possible allusions or other connections to the book of Isaiah, you may use the scriptural index at the back of the book.

At the end of each chapter you will find a study guide of four or five questions. These questions are designed to make you really search the chapter to understand what Isaiah is saying on the surface and below the surface. Taking the time to study out the answers to the questions will significantly increase the depth at which you interact with your Bible.

Disclaimer

At first glance, this book looks like commentary on the book of Isaiah, but that is not really accurate. A commentary, a good one at least, presupposes more exegetical and research work than I have attempted here. This is certainly not an exhaustive study of Isaiah. It is a study through the book with a specific purpose in mind, which is not unusual for Old Testament studies. As John Kessler wrote, “. . . all works of OT theology are highly personal and reflect the deepest concerns and convictions of their authors.”¹ This is certainly true of this book.

This devotional guide is the product of my personal journey through Isaiah in my daily devotions. Every morning for most of a year I took a bite-sized portion of the book, prayed and meditated over it, and then attempted to recognize ways that the apostle John might have alluded to Isaiah when he wrote the book Revelation. I also kept a secondary watch for ways that the passage informs other prophecies.

The bibliography in this book is purposely short. I wanted the mental exercise of drawing my insights from the Bible alone. The significant draw-

¹ John Kessler, *Old Testament Theology: Divine Call and Human Response* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), digital edition.

A Simple Guide to the Book of Isaiah

back of avoiding prior scholarly work, of course, means that sometimes my observations miss the invaluable insights of those more knowledgeable than me. Nonetheless, the journey has been valuable for me and I hope that perhaps it may be of some value to you as well.

May God bless your journey through the book of Isaiah with a focus on a better understanding of Bible prophecy that affects us even today.

Isaiah 1

If you skipped the preface of this book, opting instead to dive right into Isaiah 1, you should probably reconsider. You will likely find this book confusing and disjointed if you simply attempt to read it through. The preface will help set you up for a satisfying experience by describing the purpose of the book and the way to use it in combination with your Bible.

Introduction

When God chooses a people for a special assignment, it is the nature of sinful beings to begin enthusiastically and over time to drift away from God's plan. Israel in the past did this, Christianity in the past and present has done this as well, and will in the future, too. Every time God's people drift away from Him, He calls us back, sometimes with words and means that may seem harsh if we forget the love that undergirds His actions.

In Isaiah chapter 1, God calls for His people (known as Israel), past, present, and future, to listen to Him or else face the consequences. If you have not yet read the first chapter of Isaiah, do that before continuing.

Israel Rebels and Becomes Babylon

⁽¹⁾ Isaiah, whose life and ministry spanned the reign of four kings from Uzziah to Hezekiah, received a vision about Judah and Jerusalem.

⁽²⁾ God was and still is speaking to everyone in the heavens and the earth, and God has a problem. He has an issue with the people of Israel, His sons. He raised them, but they rebelled against Him. ⁽³⁾ Even dumb animals know their master and their place, but not Israel. They did not understand. ⁽⁴⁾ Israel had become a sinful nation, filled with guilt, evil to the core. They despised and left God. Their sins, God said, have piled up to heaven (Revelation 18:5). ⁽⁵⁾ God asks why they want to be struck again. He is trying to subdue their rebellion, but they will have none of it (Revelation 16:8-11). They are sick in the head and weak of heart. ⁽⁶⁾ Their bodies are covered with the untreated, uncared-for consequences of their rebellion (Revelation 3:18). ⁽⁷⁻⁸⁾ The land has been desimated, the cities burned, and the fields ransacked. God has allowed those who are not His people, His enemies, to enter the land and destroy it. God's people have, for all practical purposes, been abandoned.

⁽⁹⁾ If God had not ensured that a remnant had survived, Israel would have ceased to exist, like Sodom and Gomorrah (Revelation 11:8). ⁽¹⁰⁾ His people have become like those cities, which God destroyed. So God has some harsh words for them. ⁽¹¹⁻¹²⁾ Sacrifices mean nothing to God. People and animals coming to the sanctuary is nothing but trampling heaven's courts (Revelation 11:2). ⁽¹³⁻¹⁴⁾ We can quit bringing offerings if we are not living the rest of our lives for God as well. If that is our attitude, then our worship, our ceremonies, assembling solemnly for church, it all is burdensome to God. ⁽¹⁵⁾ If we are living in rebellion against God, then He will not hear us when we pray. He will turn away from answering. Even though we pray more and more we will not be heard because there is blood on our hands.

⁽¹⁶⁾ If we want God to hear us and to accept our worship, then we must wash ourselves (in the blood of the Lamb, Revelation 7:14) and become clean and pure of heart. We must stop doing the evil deeds that we do. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Not only must we remove evil from our lives, we must also replace what was removed with doing good. We must seek justice, work against those hurting others, defend the defenseless, and care for the suffering.

⁽¹⁸⁾ God is not being unreasonable. He is willing to talk to us if we are willing to listen. We do not have to become perfect immediately; He will do that work in us (Revelation 1:5). We do not have to fear that because of our sin we are beyond redemption. As diseased (red as scarlet, Revelation 17:3) as we are, He will heal us, wash us, purify us, make us white again (Revelation 7:14). ⁽¹⁹⁾ All we need to do is accept His mercy and obey His commands. If we do that, He will bless us abundantly. ⁽²⁰⁾ But if we refuse His mercy and rebel by disobeying, our end is death. God has spoken and His word never fails.

⁽²¹⁾ But the faithful city, Jerusalem, has become a prostitute. Once filled with justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers. This parallels Revelation 11:2-8, where the great city is mystically called Sodom and Egypt. Jerusalem becomes Sodom, Egypt, and also Babylon. The woman who was pure in Revelation 12:1 becomes a harlot in Revelation 17:5 and she is Babylon. ⁽²²⁻²³⁾ The faithful have become tarnished and diluted. The leaders of those who had once been faithful are themselves in rebellion against God. Stealing, bribery, greed, and lack of compassion mark their way.

⁽²⁴⁾ Therefore, God declares that He will avenge Himself upon those who have become His enemies (Revelation 18:8). ⁽²⁵⁾ But His vengeance possesses a redeeming value. When He attacks His people it is for the pur-

pose of purifying us (Revelation 3:19). ⁽²⁶⁾ Once we are purified, He restores us. We will become a righteous people, a faithful city with nothing impure in it (Revelation 21:27).

⁽²⁷⁾ And while redeeming us in His mercy, God remains a just God. God's mercy is not opposed to His justice. In the end we will be rewarded for our deeds, and only those who repent will be redeemed. ⁽²⁸⁾ But those who continue in rebellion will be crushed (Revelation 15:19; 19:15). They will come to an end (Revelation 21:8).

⁽²⁹⁾ The oak groves were places where shrine prostitutes would consort with those who came to them. The gardens or groves were places of sacrifice to false gods. ⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore, the rebellious will become like withered oaks and parched gardens. ⁽³¹⁾ Everything the rebellious do is flammable. Sin is its own fuel for the fire. Their bodies and their work will both be consumed together.

Study Guide

1. What is God hoping to accomplish by striking us with His judgments?
2. What does God think of our worship, when we are unfaithful to Him?
3. What makes our worship acceptable to God?
4. If we will repent of our unfaithfulness, what is God willing to do?
5. What will be the end result of those who continue in rebellion?