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A Prophet Of Hope & Power

Many of the prophets, particularly the minor prophets, wrote during a period of time in which God's people had already slid into the depravity of spiritual neglect and idolatry. Isaiah prophesied during the reign of four kings of the Southern kingdom of Judah; Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (**Isa 1.1**). During his lifetime he saw the up and down spiral of service to God and was given a message of what was to come as a result of this. Many of the prophetic books have more to say about the judgment of God and the negative consequences that were to come on God's people, and there is much of that in the book of Isaiah as well. The beauty of the book is that there is also much to be said about the power of God and his majesty. There is a denunciation of the idols that were being worshipped in the land in such a way that no other ancient writing contains anything like it, emphasizing the unique character of the Bible as the inspired word of God. The book begins with an important observation. "***The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.***" (**Isa 1.3**). The consequence of destruction is portrayed in the next several verses followed by a statement of preservation and hope. "***Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.***" (**Isa 1.9**). The remnant would have a purpose which would see the fulfillment of the promise of God to save not only his people, but all nations. "***And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.***" (**Isa 2.2-3**). Isaiah prophesied of the virgin birth of Christ (**Isa 7.14**) and describes the life, ministry and sufferings of Christ

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throughout the book but particularly in **chapter 53**. One of the most powerful aspects of the book, aside from the Messianic prophecies, are the statements of God's power. These are made to a people who had lost sight of their faith, their law and their God. They needed to be reminded of the awesome nature of the Lord of the universe and Isaiah points this out dramatically. "***I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself...***" (**Isa 44.24**). Note the singularity of the creation statement concerning the Earth. God also states, "***I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.***" (**Isa 45.12**). "***For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.***" (**Isa 45.18**). Notice the power, purpose and singularity here again. God repeats this theme in his statements of his person and power. He does this in the context of the ridiculous nature of the idols that have been made by the hand of man. God denounces pagan gods and idols in such a way that, if not for the seriousness of the situation, would be comedic (**Isa 44.10-15**). Concerning the making of gods of wood, the prophet writes, "***He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.***" (**Isa 44.16-17**). God emphasizes the foolishness of man in this. Next week we will continue the discussion of the book of Isaiah and his message.

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