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## Isaiah: a Messenger of God

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the prophet Isaiah.

# ISAIAH

## a Messenger of God

Isaiah was a prophet — one of the greatest of the prophets! Isaiah, whose very name in Hebrew means, “Jehovah saves,” was a messenger of God. His message is the beautiful message “of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

He was a *prophet* because he was called of the Lord to go and tell God’s message to the people of Israel. He was called by the Lord in person; he saw Him in vision “. . . sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, . . .”<sup>1</sup> he heard the voice of the Lord saying, “. . . Whom shall I send and who will go for us? . . .”<sup>1</sup> He became a prophet because he responded willingly, saying, “. . . Here am I; send me.”<sup>1</sup> He became great because throughout his lengthy ministry he continued serving, bearing the Lord’s word to the people. He taught the rich and the poor; the priests, false and true; the kings, good and bad.

He remains great today because he was wise in his counsel to kings, priests, and people; and his wise counsel remains true in the many situations of today that parallel

those of Isaiah's time. He lived in crisis times, in the day when the ten tribes of northern Israel had degenerated until they were conquered and lost (722 B.C.), and Judah was barely saved.

The leaders of nations then as now tended to put their trust for security in armies, though armies are made of men, not Gods. They, too, turned to that which was flesh and not spirit.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah spoke for the Lord to remind the war lords that he who tries to exalt his throne above the stars of God,<sup>3</sup> and who makes the earth to tremble and shakes the kingdoms, making the land as a wilderness and destroying the cities thereof<sup>3</sup>—such an one shall be brought down. Even as Lucifer, Son of the Morning, who would ascend above the heights of the clouds and would be like the most High, but who was brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit,<sup>4</sup> so shall it be on earth with those who follow Lucifer's way. By contrast, when He, the Servant of God, shall come, whose right it is to rule and reign, He with righteousness shall judge the poor and reprove with equity.<sup>5</sup> Those despots of earth who usurp power and exercise unrighteous dominion shall find that the "saw" is not greater than He who pushes it, nor the "ax" stronger than He who swings it.<sup>6</sup> These things Isaiah taught.

And he said of the foolish who take part of a piece of wood to make a fire, therewith to bake bread, and of another part make an idol with their own hands and then fall down and worship it<sup>7</sup>: they have eyes but cannot see, and they have hearts but cannot understand.<sup>7</sup> They worship gods that are not gods, and they provoke the Holy One of Israel to anger.<sup>8</sup>

Because Israel of Isaiah's time had failed in the mission unto which God called Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, and because the descendants of those patriarchs were not bringing blessings to all the other families of the earth by bearing the Name and ministry of the true and living God to all others; indeed, because Israel had "gone away backward" to the morals and theology of the idol worshippers, therefore destruction of the nation and the scattering of the people of Israel was proclaimed.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, they were told — and it was written, that their children and their children's children might know it—that the Lord was not making a full end of

them; someday a remnant would return and would gather strangers out of all nations along with them, and would make of all a peaceful kingdom over which the stem of Jesse would reign. He would cause all nations to beat their swords into plowshares and make them to learn war no more. In preparation for that great day, the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains and all nations would flow unto it, to learn of His ways, to walk in His paths.<sup>9</sup>

Isaiah knew the ways of God with His children here on earth. He told how the Lord seeks to bring about the end of Man's evil ways by persuading him to repentance and promising magnanimously that he who will wash and make himself clean, putting away the evils of his doings from him, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well—seeking justice, relieving the oppressed—such an one may then come and reason together with the Lord; and though his sins be as scarlet, he shall be white as snow.<sup>10</sup> And how could God in justice thus so generously forgive the sinner? Because of Him who would be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace might be upon Him, and with His stripes we might be healed.<sup>11</sup> He who was to be the Divine Son of a virgin,<sup>12</sup> Immanuel, who is God-with-us. He was to be the Child unto us born, and the Son unto us given, who should be called "... Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."<sup>13</sup> He is the Lord, by whom we are saved with an everlasting salvation; he is the Lord who created the heavens and formed the earth and made it; he is a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Him.<sup>14</sup> These things Isaiah knew and taught.

"... Great are the words of Isaiah," said the Saviour to the Nephites, "for surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles."<sup>15</sup> It is indeed so. There are important messages for us today in his book; and as Nephi said of the things and people whom Isaiah wrote about: "... Ye may liken them unto you and unto all men."<sup>16</sup>

—Ellis T. Rasmussen \*

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1 *Isaiah* 6:1, 8.

2 Allusion to *Isaiah* 31:3.

3 Allusion to *Isaiah* 14:13, 16, 17.

4 Cites *Isaiah* 14:13-15.

5 Summarizes and paraphrases *Isaiah* 11:1-4.

6 Alludes to *Isaiah* 10:15.

7 Summarizes *Isaiah* 44:14-20.

8 Alludes to many utterances of the prophet and to *Isaiah* 1:4.

9 Summarizes the basic message of all the prophets of the time, and paraphrases many passages from *Isaiah*.

10 Summarizes *Isaiah* 1:16-18.

11 *Isaiah* 53 is source of this phraseology and doctrine.

12 *Isaiah* 7:14.

13 *Isaiah* 9:6.

14 *Isaiah* 45:15-21.

15 3 *Nephi* 23:1, 2.

16 2 *Nephi* 11:8.





### THE PICTURE

The serious, urgent expression of Isaiah in this painting could reflect his sense of responsibility in bearing a weighty message from the Lord to a nation about to be divided in civil war — and eventually to be enslaved. The sky's late afternoon glow seems to say the day is far spent, and there is still much to be done.

Professor Eugene Spiro, the artist, comes from a deeply religious Jewish family and is one of the best-known German portrait painters. Born in Germany in 1874, he has painted also in France and the United States of America. His works are to be found in museums and private collections all over the world. He is called one of the last living master painters of the impressionist school. For a long time Professor Spiro wanted to portray the great prophets of the Bible; and after many years of work, he recently fulfilled this dream.

—*Virgil B. Smith.*