Isaiah the Prophet of God

Not much is known about Isaiah the man. He is said to be the son of Amoz and likely grew up during the days of Uzziah. Isaiah was called to the office of prophet at the end of Uzziah’s reign (710 BC) and extended his work throughout the reign of Hezekiah (see Isaiah 6:1 (653 BC)). His time as a prophet covered a span of approximately fifty seven years. Amos and Hosea prophesied in Israel while Isaiah and Micah prophesied to Judah. Israel and Judah had experienced prosperity unlike any other time save the days of Solomon. Though God had richly blessed them they did not return his loving care. They were in need of instruction and reproof.

Isaiah voluntarily took this job.

Isaiah, like Daniel, received a heavenly vision of the throne of God in the year that king Uzziah died (710 BC) (Isaiah chapter 6). The Lord asks, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Isaiah, knowing the degenerate state of Judah, responded saying "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8). God tells Isaiah that he is to go to the wicked of Judah and expose their sins (see also Isaiah 58:1). As we read throughout the book of Isaiah we see that the prophet's secondary work was to encourage the captives in Babylon. Isaiah was to tell the remnant in Babylonian captivity about the coming servant, Christ, and the salvation that awaited the faithful. The Lord warns his prophet that the people would be hardened by his message as many are hardened today by the gospel of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 6:9ff and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Isaiah, like Ezra the scribe and priest, was up for the challenge and had obviously prepared himself for this day (see Ezra 7:10).

Judah had not been attacked by Babylon as of yet nor had they began their seventy years of captivity as Jeremiah had foretold (see Jeremiah 25:11). Isaiah; however, spoke of these events as though
they had already occurred. Isaiah, like David, was a prophet of God who predicted and wrote the words of our Lord hundreds of years before he would actually say them (see Psalms 22:1 and 16:8-12). Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:3 at Luke 4:16-19 and then said, "Today has this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:20-21). Such an event causes amazement in our minds. Approximately 700 years before Christ would come into the world, Isaiah, by inspiration of God, records the Lord's words. Truly Jehovah is eternally omniscient (see Isaiah 46:9-10) and his word everlasting (Proverbs 8:22-26).

Jesus said, "From henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am he" (John 13:19). Again, Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you that you should not be caused to stumble" (John 16:1). 2 Peter 3:3 is an example of what Jesus spoke about. Jesus and his apostles spoke words not only of encouragement and instruction but they gave warnings too. Jesus spoke about future things that the disciples would face before they happened so that they could prepare themselves now to combat these things in the future (John 14:29). Isaiah similarly and prophetically spoke to those in Babylonian captivity.

Fifty seven years would pass as Isaiah performed his God ordained work (The last days of Uzziah through Hezekiah's reign over Judah or 710 to 653 BC). Though Isaiah was given other unpleasant tasks, such as informing Hezekiah of his death (Isaiah 38:1), we never hear him complain to God. Isaiah remained true to his purpose expressed at chapter 6:8 when he said, "Here am I; send me." Jesus has given his people the same tasks (see Matthew 28:18-20). We too can speak the end before the beginning in relationship to judgment, heaven, and hell (see Isaiah 46:9-10). The duty of the Christian today is to expose the sins of the world, by way of the gospel message, so that men may come to repentance (see Ephesians 5:11 and 2 Timothy 2:1-2). I can speak of the Day of Judgment now as though it were happening as we speak because of the surety of the event (see 1 Corinthians 5:5). Let us all go about our spiritual work without murmuring or complaining as did Isaiah. Souls are at stake and if we don't do our part to convert them someone else will (Esther 4:14). God's kingdom is eternal and indestructible!

John Robertson

The Book of Esther

"For if you hold your peace at this time then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish: and who knows whether you are not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:14

Date

Many believe the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther to be Xerxes who ruled during the days of the battle of Thermopylae. A small force of Greek warriors led by King Leonidas of Sparta resisted the Persian forces yet were ultimately defeated. Looking to corresponding Biblical history and dates will help us determine the time this book was written. The early chapters of Ezra record the efforts of Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem. At the end of Ezra chapter 6, Zerubbabel had completed the construction of the new temple through the encouraging and instructive teaching of Haggai and Zechariah. Twenty one years had passed from the time the Israelites return to Jerusalem and complete the construction of the temple (i.e., first year of Cyrus over Babylon (536 BC) to the sixth year of Darius the Great (515 BC) (see Ezra 6:15)).

Ezra chapter 7 takes place during the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus who ruled Persia from 464 to 424 BC (Ezra 7:7) (i.e., 457 BC). Between the sixth year of Darius and the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus there was a period of 58 years skipped by Ezra (the time between chapter 6 and 7). During this time, it is most probable that the events of Esther occur. One proof of this date may be seen when we follow the time line of Artaxerxes I Longimanus in Ezra and Nehemiah. Artaxerxes' reign goes into the thirty second year (see Nehemiah 2:1; 5:14 and 13:6). The Artaxerxes / Ahasuerus of the book of Esther only reigned 20 years. These two kings cannot possibly be the same people. Ezra 7 begins in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (i.e., 457 BC), and chapter six ended during the sixth year of Darius (i.e., 515 BC). The book of Esther was written during the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus (485 – 465 BC) (i.e., 482 BC - Esther 1:1-3).

Let us study this most fascinating book and see the great lessons for all of us today in our own lives and times.