JUNE 2024 THURSDAY 3:00 pm BIBLE STUDY: **The Three Isaiahs**

Led by Pastor Mandy Derr

ZOOM LINK:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82936780016?pwd=dm8wL3V1bXVaZldybHQzSXVpZG9OZz09>.

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**June 13**:  HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF EACH ISAIAH

                 CALLS OF ISAIAH 1, 2, 3

**I. First Isaiah, chapters 1-39 (not including 25-27)**

**A. Dates of ministry:** From “… the year that King Uzziah died” (6:1) 742 BCE to ca. 701 BCE.

**B. Historical context:** In Jerusalem during the destruction of Israel in 722 BCE and the rise of Babylon threatening Judah.

**C. Kings of Judah during his ministry:**

Jotham (742-745 BCE)

Ahaz (745-715 BCE)

Hezekiah (715-687 BCE)

**D. Historical Problem**

The Assyrians are invading the Kingdom of Israel. The kings of Israel and Syria form a coalition to fight back against the invaders. They ask Ahaz, the king of Judah to join them. However, King Ahaz refused. Because he refused, the former two kings decide to invade Judah instead and depose King Ahaz. King Ahaz then asks the king of Assyria for help. (2 Kings 16:5-9.)

Then King Rezin of Aram (Syria) and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel came up to wage war on Jerusalem; they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him. 6At that time the king of Edom recovered Elath for Edom, and drove the Judeans from Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath, where they live to this day. 7Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, ‘I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.’ 8Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. 9The king of Assyria listened to him; the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir; then he killed Rezin.

**E. Theological Problem**

After asking Assyria for assistance against Israel and Syria, Ahaz has an altar built to an Assyrian deity (or to the king) and therefore breaks the first commandment. (2 Kings 16:10-16)

When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. 11The priest Uriah built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, just so did the priest Uriah build it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus. 12When the king came from Damascus, the king viewed the altar. Then the king drew near to the altar, went up on it, 13and offered his burnt-offering and his grain-offering, poured his drink-offering, and dashed the blood of his offerings of well-being against the altar. 14The bronze altar that was before the Lord he removed from the front of the house, from the place between his altar and the house of the Lord, and put it on the north side of his altar. 15King Ahaz commanded the priest Uriah, saying, ‘Upon the great altar offer the morning burnt-offering, and the evening grain-offering, and the king’s burnt-offering, and his grain-offering, with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, their grain-offering, and their drink-offering; then dash against it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice; but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.’ 16The priest Uriah did everything that King Ahaz commanded.

**F. Social Problem:**

The rulers and the wealthy cheat the poor and do nothing to help the needy, breaking the second great commandment. (Isaiah 1:23; 3:13-15)

23 Your princes are rebels  
   and companions of thieves.  
Everyone loves a bribe  
   and runs after gifts.  
They do not defend the orphan,  
   and the widow’s cause does not come before them.

The Lord rises to argue his case;  
   he stands to judge the peoples.  
14 The Lord enters into judgement  
   with the elders and princes of his people:  
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;  
   the spoil of the poor is in your houses.  
15 What do you mean by crushing my people,  
   by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.

**G: First Isaiah’s Call: (Isaiah 6:1-12)**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3And one called to another and said:  
‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.’  
4The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 5And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ 8Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’ 9And he said, ‘Go and say to this people:  
“Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.”  
10 Make the mind of this people dull,  
   and stop their ears,  
   and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes,  
   and listen with their ears,  
and comprehend with their minds,  
   and turn and be healed.’  
11 Then I said, ‘How long, O Lord?’ And he said:  
‘Until cities lie waste  
   without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
   and the land is utterly desolate;  
12 until the Lord sends everyone far away,  
   and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.  
13 Even if a tenth part remains in it,  
   it will be burned again,  
like a terebinth or an oak  
   whose stump remains standing  
   when it is felled.’  
The holy seed is its stump.

**II. Second Isaiah, chapters 40-54**

**A. Dates of ministry:**

Around 538 BCE to around 500 BCE

**B. Historical context:**

In Babylon, responding to the victory of Cyrus the Persian and his invitation that the Jews return to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 36:22-23)

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfilment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: 23‘Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up.’

**C. Kings of Judah during his ministry:**

The last reigning king of Judah, Zedekiah, was killed by the Babylonians when they sacked Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

The previous king of Judah, Jehoiachin, was taken as a prisoner to Babylon in 597 BCE. In 560 BCE, he was released and lived as a guest in Babylon. We know nothing of his death or if he had any offspring.

**D. Historical Problem:**

After a generation of exile in Babylon, the Jews are invited to go back home. Some are reluctant, having built livelihoods in Babylon. Others, upon going back to Jerusalem, are reluctant to re-build the city and the Temple.(Ezra 4:4,5)

Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build, 5and they bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

**E. Theological Problem:**

If we exiled Jews are God’s chosen people and Judah/Jerusalem is our God-given home, why were we exiled and can we trust God to keep covenant promises? (Isaiah 40:6-8)

A voice says, ‘Cry out!’  
   And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’  
All people are grass,  
   their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
The grass withers, the flower fades,  
   when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
   surely the people are grass.  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
   but the word of our God will stand for ever.

**F. Social Problem:**

Fear of losing identity. Fear of risking all to move back “home.” Fear of the “people of the land” in Judah. Selfish concern for themselves rather than responding to the need to rebuild the Temple, Jerusalem’s wall, and care for the needy among them.

**G: Second Isaiah’s Call: (Isaiah 40:1-11)**

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
   says your God.  
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
   and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
   that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord’s hand  
   double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out:  
‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
   make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
4 Every valley shall be lifted up,  
   and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
   and the rough places a plain.  
5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
   and all people shall see it together,  
   for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

6 A voice says, ‘Cry out!’  
   And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’  
All people are grass,  
   their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
7 The grass withers, the flower fades,  
   when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
   surely the people are grass.  
8 The grass withers, the flower fades;  
   but the word of our God will stand for ever.  
9 Get you up to a high mountain,  
   O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
   O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
   lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
   ‘Here is your God!’  
10 See, the Lord God comes with might,  
   and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
   and his recompense before him.  
11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
   he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
   and gently lead the mother sheep.

**III. Third Isaiah, chapters** **chapters 55-66**;

**A. Dates of ministry:**

Maybe 520 BCE to closer to 400 BCE.

**B. Historical context:**

Jerusalem during the rebuilding of the Temple, the city, and the beginnings of Hellenist Judaism after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

**C. Kings of Judah during his ministry: None**

**D. Historical Problem:**

No “divinely” authorized governing authorities. Temptation to take up the practices of other more successful cultures.

**E. Theological Problem:**

Syncretism: Exhortation to keep God's eternal promise to David is now made to the people of Israel/Judah at large. The book ends by enjoining righteousness as the final stages of God's plan come to pass, including the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion and the realization of Yahweh's kingship.

**F. Social Problem:**

Social division --A sense of inferiority among those rebuilding Jerusalem and living there leads to envy of other nations and a division of the people between those who will live according to the covenant and Jewish tradition and those who are ready to adopt the ways of more successful peoples.

**G: Third Isaiah’s Call: (Isaiah 61:1-4)**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
   because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
   to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
   and release to the prisoners;  
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour,  
   and the day of vengeance of our God;  
   to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
   to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
   the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
   the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
   they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
   the devastations of many generations.

**III. Fourth Isaiah, chapters** **24-27.**

Everything said about this section is speculative. “Apocalyptic literature such as these chapters are prevalent in the 200s BCE.