

A

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

On

THE BOOK of THE PROPHET ISAIAH

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LESSON ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH'S WORLD

Welcome to the study of one of the world's great spiritual writings! May its important message give you help and blessing.

To enjoy and to understand the Book of the Prophet Isaiah it is important to picture his world. Prophets do not drop down from heaven. They are human beings who live in a certain society and age. We need to know something about the people whom Isaiah was addressing, and the situation which required his appearance.

If you read this Introduction carefully the Bible Correspondence Course will be easier for you. The Introduction has the following sections:

- A. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: In What Sense Is This Prophecy A Book?
- B. The Prophet: Who Was Isaiah?
- C. The Geography of Palestine When Isaiah Lived
- D. The Political Conditions of the Time
- E. The Kings of Judea During Isaiah's Life: What Were They Like?
- F. The Social Conditions and the Need For a Prophet
- G. What Is A Prophet?
- H. Isaiah and His Personality
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- J. Three Types of Salvation That the Prophet Proclaims
- K. The Meaning of Four Key Terms That Isaiah Often Uses
- L. A Summary Outline of the Book
- M. Maps

A. The Book

The Book of the Prophet Isaiah is one of the chapters of the Bible. Each chapter is called a book. There are altogether 66 books -- 39 are in what is called the Old Testament, and 27 are in the New Testament. The Old Testament deals with matters before the coming of Jesus, starting from the creation of the world. Isaiah's prophecy is one of the books of the Old Testament. The New Testament deals with the life and teachings of Jesus.

You may wonder about the meaning of the word "testament." That word means agreement or covenant. It refers to the agreement that God made with human beings to bless them. The Old Testament shows how God's people broke that agreement, separated from God's path, and became deserving of punishment. Nevertheless, God the Merciful also promised to save them. The New Testament books tell how God fulfilled His promise and sent a Saviour.

Question: Have you read the Book of the Prophet Isaiah before this? _____.

Question: Have you read any other part of the Bible? _____.

B. The Prophet: Who Was Isaiah?

The Prophet Isaiah was a Hebrew who lived in the 5th century B.C. [B.C. = Before Christ]. That was two centuries before Gautama Buddha, seven centuries before Jesus Christ, and fourteen centuries before Muhammad and Sankaracarya. Thus Isaiah belongs to the notable figures of the distant past. Yet his message is a living one. It is very relevant to our life today. The name Isaiah means "God is salvation." And salvation is what the world and we need most.

Isaiah lived in Palestine, most of the time in the famous city of Jerusalem. Palestine and Jerusalem are always in the news and on TV today, but they were also well known in Isaiah's time, especially because of their strategic location. Isaiah was sent by God to proclaim the divine word to his own Hebrew brothers and sisters. That is not easy to do. The Messiah Jesus once said: "A prophet does not receive honour in his own country!"

About a thousand years before Isaiah Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, came from the Baghdad region and peacefully settled in Palestine. There he bought some land from the inhabitants who were called Canaanites. Much later his descendant David established a separate kingdom within Palestine, and David's son Solomon built a great temple in Jerusalem. However, by Isaiah's time the kingdom of David had fallen apart and was being overrun by enemies. The Prophet Isaiah had to prophesy at a very sad and difficult time in the history of the Hebrews.

Question: Does God usually send prophets in good times or in bad times? _____

C. The Geography of Palestine When Isaiah Lived

Palestine had many small divisions in Isaiah's time. It is important to look at them because they are all mentioned by the Prophet. Please keep your map beside you as a guide.

-- On the western side of the Jordan River there were three territories in that small space:

- a. Philistia was on the Mediterranean Sea coast; it is Gaza today.
- b. Northern Israel, comprised of ten Hebrew tribes, was inland. Its capital city was Samaria.

Sometimes it was called Samaria or Ephraim.

- c. On Samaria's southern border was Judea, whose capital city was Jerusalem. Judea was composed of two Hebrew tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Sometimes it was called Judah. Here is where Isaiah prophesied.

- d. The total size of these three western territories was about 65 kilometers wide and 200 km long.

- e. Just beyond Northern Israel was the land of Phoenicia, with its two ports of Tyre and Sidon; it is today's Lebanon.

-- Now let us look at the eastern side of the Jordan River. It also had three different territories:

- a. The northern region was called Aram; it is Syria today. The language of Aramaic was a

kind of international language at this time. The chief city was Damascus.

- b. South of Aram were two small adjoining territories; the first was called Ammon, the second Edom.

-- At a distance from Palestine were the two great powers of that age: Assyria and Egypt. Assyria lay northeast of Jerusalem, about the distance from Calicut to Goa. That is now southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. The chief city was Nineveh. Egypt was southwest of Jerusalem, about as far as Calicut from Trivandrum. At this time it was not so powerful as Assyria. In southern Iraq where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together a new power was beginning to arise, namely Babylon. That had been the homeland of Abraham.

Question: Can you remember a period in the history of Kerala when it was divided into different sections? When was that? _____.

D. The Political Conditions of the Time

This was a very unsettled time politically, and there was a great deal of fighting:

- (1) There were a lot of international struggles. Assyria interfered constantly with Palestine. In 722 B. C. one of its rulers named Sargon II took people from the northern Hebrew tribes into captivity where they were lost. In 701 B. C. another Assyrian ruler named Sennecharib gained power over Judea leaving only Jerusalem free. Some of Judea's kings tried to make an alliance with Egypt, which the Prophet Isaiah condemned. Later the rising nation of Babylon also invaded Palestine.
- (2) The small states that made up Palestine were also constantly quarreling. We have mentioned their names. The Philistines and Hebrews fought frequently.
- (3) The Hebrews themselves, who were supposed to be God's people and to serve as His chosen representatives, instead were fighting a 20-year civil war. It ended only when the northern Hebrews from Samaria were carried off to Assyria.

Question: Do you agree that it takes both bravery and wisdom to be a Prophet in war-time?

E. The Kings of Judea During Isaiah's Life: What Were They Like?

There were four rulers in Judea who were active during Isaiah's period. Although three were personally better than the kings of Northern Israel, they were not successful in creating a God-fearing society.

(1) Uzziah: He ruled 783-742 B.C. The Prophet Isaiah received his call from God the year of Uzziah's death. This king developed agriculture, strengthened the army and the walls of Jerusalem, and managed to hold off surrounding enemies. Unfortunately he contracted leprosy, and his son Jotham was the regent for the last eight years of his rule.

(2) Jotham: He ruled 742-735, after Uzziah died. He was personally pious but he could not stop the moral deterioration of his people. He fought hard against the Ammonites.

(3) Ahaz: He was king 735-715. His reign was a disaster. He ignored the prophetic warnings and participated in idolatrous and immoral religious rites. He even used the treasures of Solomon's temple to bribe the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser to leave the area.

(4) Hezekiah: He ruled 715-681. He was faithful to God, believed in the power of prayer, and tried to eliminate the immoral fertility rites that the Canaanites--who now lived in Philistia--followed. His reign was generally prosperous. He constructed a safe water tunnel into Jerusalem; it helped to save the city when the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib besieged it. The Assyrian army withdrew when it was struck by a mysterious plague. Although Hezekiah was a brave leader he also tried to bribe the Egyptians, and Isaiah reproved him for that error.

Question: Multiple choice: Do you think that religion and politics should a. be completely separate, b. have some connection, or c. religion should control politics? _____.

If you wish to say more about your opinion, use the following space.

F. The Social Conditions When Isaiah Lived

The social conditions in Palestine were almost as bad as the political ones. Rulers were often cruel and corrupt. Judges were unfair. Landowners were greedy, and the rich oppressed the poor. Religious practice had greatly deteriorated, and religious leaders were mostly interested in power and position. There was a lot of immoral behavior of different kinds. Is it any wonder that God had to send prophets to the area? In fact, He sent four of them! In addition to Isaiah in Judea, God also sent Amos, Hosea and Micah to prophesy in Northern Israel. Probably because of the warfare Isaiah did not seem to know about them. Their message was very similar, but none was greater than Isaiah.

Question: Society today has many similar problems. If God sent a prophet here, what do you think

he would warn about most of all? _____.

G. What Is A Prophet?

People use the word prophet in several different ways. Here we must consider the Old Testament meaning. The Hebrew word for prophet, nawi, means "someone who speaks for another." In the Old Testament that means someone who speaks for God. God chooses and sends His messenger for that purpose.

Since a prophet speaks for God, that fact determines his message. God is holy; hence the prophet Amos declared: "Hate evil and do good" (Amos 5:14). But God is also loving; so Isaiah proclaimed: "He will abundantly pardon" (Is. 55:7). Thus, in the Old Testament, a true prophet announces both God's anger against sin and God's graciousness toward repentant sinners.

A prophet is a communicator. He uses language that his listeners can grasp, and

illustrations that they can understand. For example, as we have seen, when Isaiah lived it was war-time. Armies were marching, swords were flashing, people were dying. So he often uses military language and pictures to illustrate what God is doing. Similarly, the land around Jerusalem was used for farming, and there were many vineyards. So Isaiah often used agricultural illustrations.

A prophet also foretells what is coming. God's Spirit gives him a vision of the future. We can see that very clearly in Isaiah's prophesy. He looks ahead and sees what will happen: A Saviour is coming!! It is because of this insight that he ranks so high among the prophets.

Question: Do you think that one's salvation is an important matter? _____.

H. The Personality of the Prophet Isaiah

We do not have a photograph of Isaiah. Neither do we have his biography. His purpose was to proclaim God's Word not to give a lot of information about himself. We know when he lived, but not the actual date of his birth. We also know that he must have been educated because his writing is beautiful, and because he knew the Hebrew traditions. We do not know the source of his income.

We can understand some things about his personality. We know that he was both stern and tender-hearted, ready to warn but also consoling. He was a spiritual and pious man, straightforward in his character. He loved God and believed that it is wrong to depend on political and military alliances to solve our problems -- rather we should turn to God for help. He opposed meaningless rote religion, and called for justice in human affairs. He was a statesman as well as a prophet, and he was highly respected. Like the Mahatma he was at the same time spiritual and active in public affairs. The true measure of his greatness, however, is his message.

Question: If you met the Prophet and went for a cup of tea, what is the first question you would like to ask him? _____.

I. Isaiah's Focus On God's Oneness, Greatness and Salvation

As you read the Book of the Prophet Isaiah you will see that he touches on many topics, but he concentrates on three things:

(1) He wants us to remember that God is one and that worshipping many idols is out of place. At this time there were many different types of religious beliefs and practices in the Mediterranean region. They were associated with a variety of deities, whose images were usually made from wood or stone. Like the prophets before him Isaiah too proclaimed: "The Lord your God is one Lord."

(2) Isaiah reminds us that the One God is Great and Majestic. He is the Creator and Lord of the universe. He, not human beings, rules the world. He is not only great in power but great in righteousness. The Prophet calls Him the Holy One. He demands righteousness in human behaviour.

(3) The third thing is all-important. Isaiah wants us to remember that God is the Saviour of mankind. He is not only great in power and holiness but also great in love. He weeps over our behaviour, but still has mercy upon us. According to His great mercy He arranges a way of forgiveness and salvation for us. A special name that Isaiah uses for God reveals this focus. That is the name Redeemer or the Lord-Redeemer or The Lord-Redeemer and Holy One.

Question: What does the word "redeemed" mean? _____

J. Three Types of Salvation That Isaiah Proclaimed

The Prophet Isaiah points to three kinds of salvation: physical rescue, public reform, and the personal forgiveness of sins.

One kind of salvation is the nation's rescue. Suppose that a ruthless enemy has made war

against your country. The enemy has put many people into prison camps and the rest are slaves. A friendly country comes and drives them away, and frees you again. "Oh, we are saved!", the people cry. That is one kind of liberation that Isaiah proclaims -- God will deliver his chosen people.

A second type of salvation is public reform. Suppose that your society is in such turmoil that law and order barely exist; corruption is everywhere; morality has deteriorated, and nobody cares for the welfare of others. Then a reform party with a strong leader arises and re-establishes good conduct. "Oh, we are saved!", the people cry. That is a second kind of deliverance that Isaiah proclaims -- God will restore the spirit of goodness.

The third kind of salvation is spiritual help. You are worried about the power of sin in your life. You know that you must face the Holy God on the Day of Judgment. Some people call it "the Day of Doom." You feel lonely and afraid. Someone very powerful says, "I will help you overcome this problem." It is the Awesome Redeemer Lord who says that. "Oh, we are saved!", the people cry. Isaiah proclaims this essential salvation -- a door of hope.

In the Hebrew language the word for salvation is shalom. The word means full and complete deliverance. That is the gift of God which the Prophet Isaiah proclaims. It starts here and becomes complete in heaven.

K. The Meaning of Four Key Terms That the Prophet Uses Frequently

(1) Jehovah, or Lord:

This is the great Hebrew name for God. Like Arabic the Hebrew written language is made up of consonants, to which vowels are added by special marks. This Hebrew name has three consonants -- ya, ha, and wa. If you add the original vowels the word becomes YAHWEH, which means I AM. The Hebrew people, however, did not want to speak this sacred word; out of respect

they took vowels from another word for Lord and added them to the consonants ya, ha, and wa. In that way it became Jahowa (English Jehovah). The hybrid term Jehovah means "I am the Everlasting Lord."

The Hebrews at times also used another common name for God which is EL or ELOHIM. The Prophet Isaiah himself makes use of many beautiful names for God. There is a reason for that. No single human word can fully express the wonder of God -- God is greater than human language. So we must use many names to describe the Almighty.

Question: What is your favorite name for God? _____.

(2) The God of Jacob

Isaiah uses this term frequently. Jacob was Abraham's grandson and Isaac's son. So "God of Jacob" means the same as "God of Abraham and Isaac." It signifies the Almighty who keeps His promises to His chosen people.

(3) Israel

It is from the patriarch Jacob that we also get the name Israel. Jacob once prayed all night and so God changed his name to Israel; the Hebrew word "israel" means "he wrestled with God." Hence the people who are descended from Jacob are called the children of Israel, as well as Hebrews or Jews. The Prophet Isaiah uses the word Israel in two ways:

-- In the first usage Israel is a term for the family of Abraham, which God chose for a special purpose. Its members were to represent God by their holy behaviour, and through them God would send the Saviour of mankind. God therefore called Abraham's family "the chosen people," not because they were better than anyone else, but because of their special function. To remind them of their special duty God often sent prophets to them. In this usage "Israel" is a positive term.

-- The word "Israel" is also used in a second way in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. In this

usage it refers to the ten northern Hebrew tribes in Samaria, frequently in a negative and disapproving sense because their kingdom often became corrupt. The break between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes, Judea, came at the time of King Solomon. In his old age he began to tolerate other gods to please his foreign wives. God became angry and told Solomon that the northern tribes would be taken away from his descendants. They would control only Judea.

(4) Zion

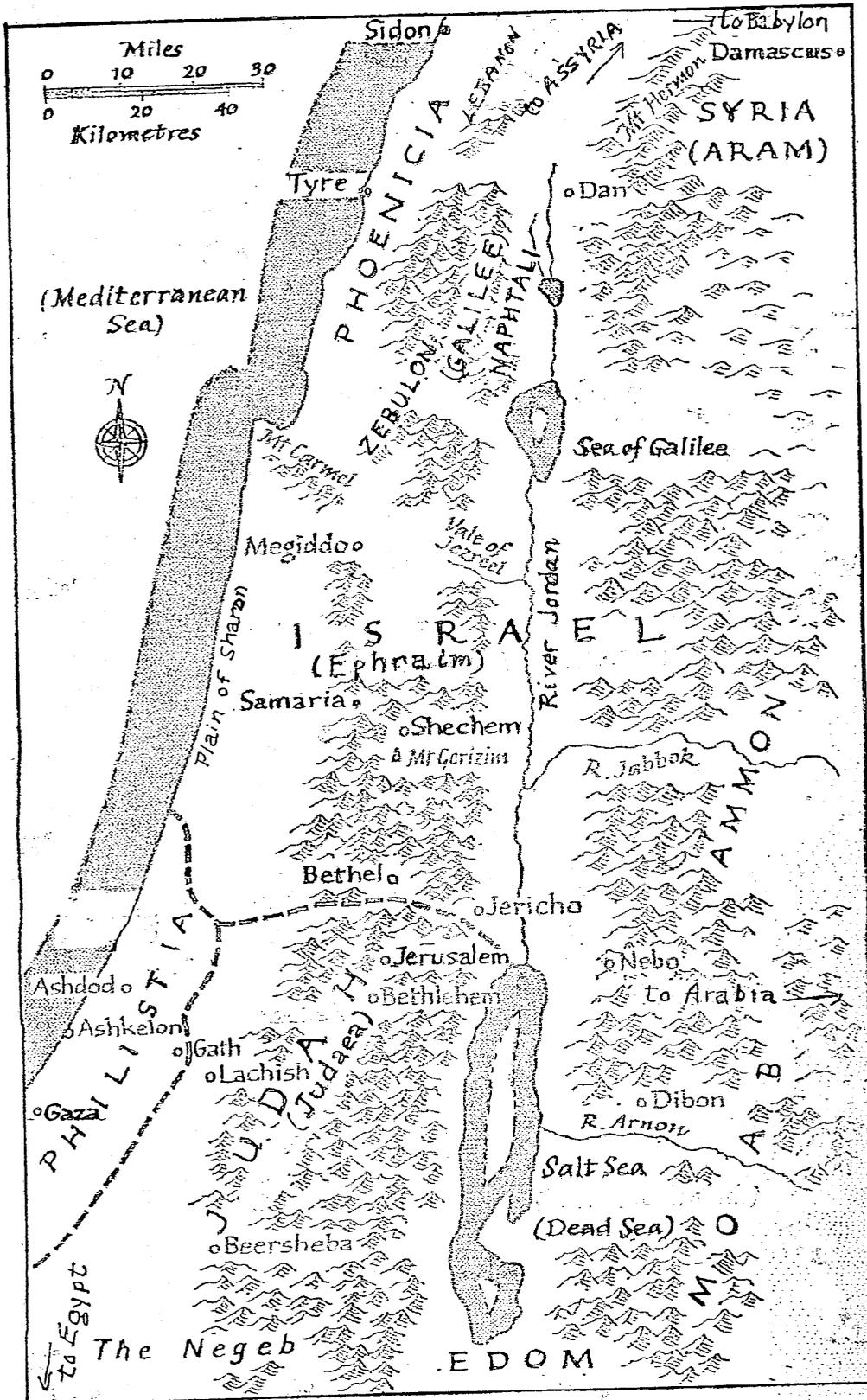
This was the name of one of the two hills on which Jerusalem was built. In the course of time "Zion" and "Mount Zion" became titles for Jerusalem. It also began to signify God's faithful people, and Isaiah uses it often in this sense.

L. Summary of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

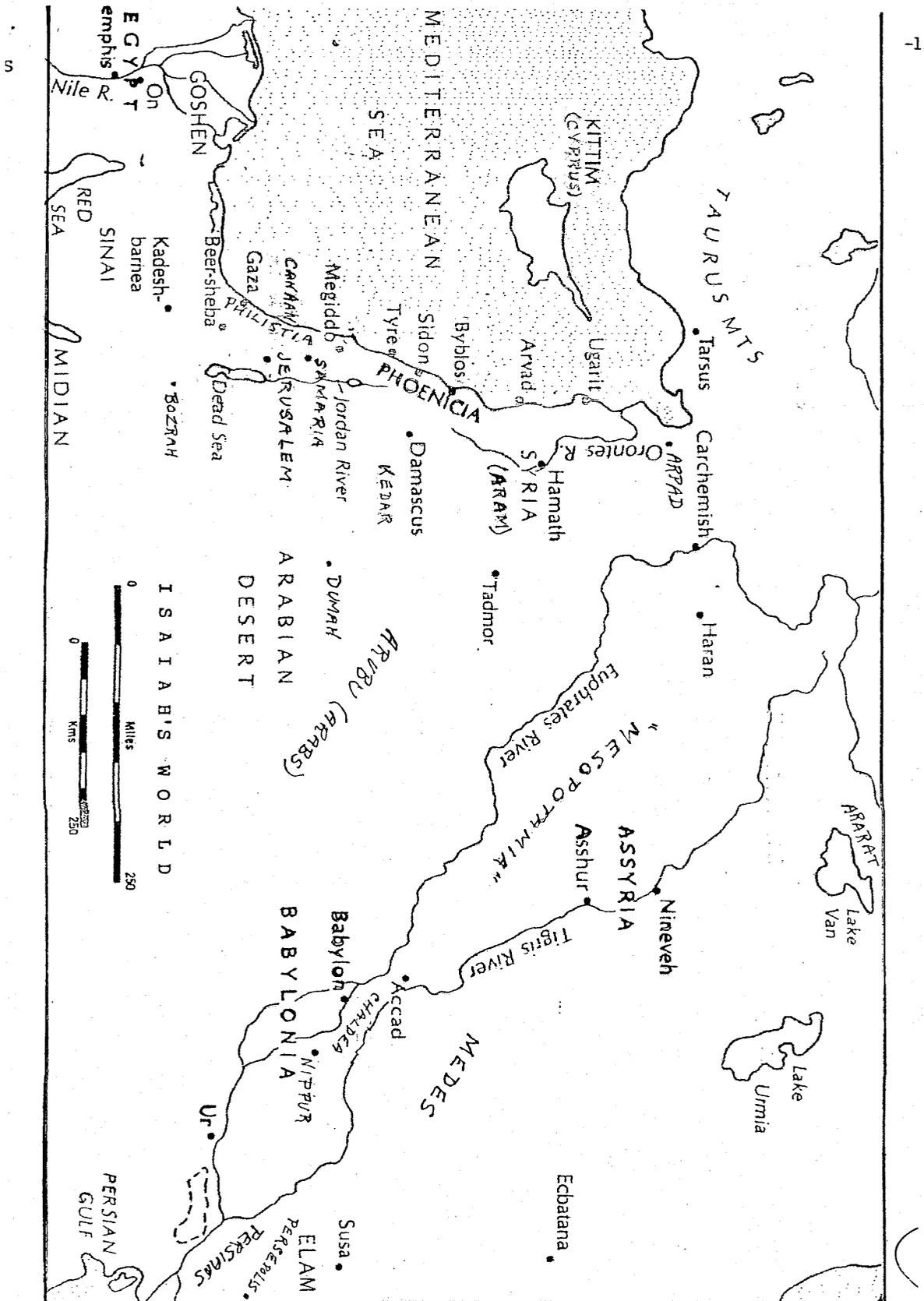
The book has two distinct sections. Chapters 1-39 make up the first part, and chapters 40-66 are the second part.

Chapters 1-39 are mainly a warning to the nations, including both the rebellious children of Israel and other erring nations. They are to repent of their misbehavior, for God will judge them severely if their pattern of life does not change.

Chapters 40-66 are mainly words of promise and hope. God loves His people and will not forsake them despite their bad conduct. He will graciously send a Servant-Saviour who will deliver them and restore them as God's people. Much more than that, however, he will liberate the whole world from the power of evil.



Palestine in the eighth century B.C.
in the days of the Prophet Isaiah



LESSON TWO

[Note: This lesson covers chapters one and two]

CHAPTER ONE

vv. 1-7 GOD'S DISAPPOINTMENT WITH HIS PEOPLE

v. 1: In connection with some prophets the Old Testament says that "the word of the Lord came" to them. With others like Isaiah it uses a different expression.

Question: What did Isaiah see? _____.

Where was he when he saw the vision -- under a tree, looking at the sunset, in a temple? We do not know. But we know that it had a powerful effect on him.

Question: What was the vision about? _____.

vv. 2-3: These words almost sound like a charge uttered in a court room. God is explaining why He is so disappointed with His people.

Question: In one word what is the basic charge that He raises in verse two? _____.

v. 4: The sin of rebellion against God is fundamental and universal. Even "good people" are rebellious sometimes and do not obey God's commands. For God's chosen people, the Hebrews, this produced bad results.

Question: What are their four sins listed in this verse? _____, _____, _____, and _____.

vv. 5-6:

Question: To what is evil compared in this verse? _____.

v. 7:

Question: What three punishments are God's people experiencing? _____, _____, and _____.

vv. 8-20 GOD IS ANGRY AT NOMINAL ROTE RELIGION

vv. 8-9: Sodom and Gomorrah were two Palestinian, cities that were destroyed by fire because of their great immorality. Now God says to his chosen people: "You are Sodom and Gomorrah now." It was a devastating charge. It seems that God regards meaningless rote religion as bad as immorality!

vv. 10- 15: The essential problem is not religious festivals or ceremonies, for God commanded

some. The problem lies in the attitude with which they are approached. They are a means to God's purpose, not an end in themselves.

Question: What does God dislike about the way His people are conducting their religious practices? _____.

vv. 16-17:

Question: What should God's servants be concentrating on in their religious behaviour and practice? _____.

Question: How do you think Isaiah would answer the question, what is true religion?

_____.

NOW LOOK BACK AT VERSE 12.

Question: When will we enter into God's presence? _____.

On the Day of Judgment God will not ask us how many times we fasted, but rather whether we helped the suffering.

vv. 18-20: Now comes a very famous promise of hope in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Please think about these words.

Question: What do you think God is promising in verse 18? _____.

As Isaiah explains later in his book God's promise of forgiveness will be fulfilled when the Servant-Saviour comes.

vv. 21-31 GOD IS SERIOUS. HE HATES SIN.

v. 21-24: "Play the whore" means the worship of false gods.

Question: Name three other sins mentioned in these verses: _____, _____, and _____.

vv. 25-26: In God's sight the purpose of punishment is rehabilitation. He loves us like a father and wants to restore us as His children.

Question: After their restoration God's people will have two names. What are they? _____ and _____.

You can see how important these two principles are to God.

vv. 27-31: One mark of the true life that comes with God's forgiveness is the worship of Him alone. The people of Judea had been tempted by the worship of nature gods.

Summary Question: Find and list all the five names for God that are used in this chapter: _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

CHAPTER TWO

vv. 1-4: THE WAY TO PEACE

v. 1: This verse says that the Prophet Isaiah sees the Word. In chapter one he sees a vision. Vision and Word go together. God's method of revelation to the prophets is beyond our understanding.

vv. 2-4: Peace is one of the deepest human desires. At the same time it always seems out of reach. Isaiah prophesies about two kinds of peace: one is peace between nations, the other is peace in the heart. Here he talks about peace between peoples and nations. He visualizes a time when wars will end. The words of verse 4 are often quoted.

Question: In your opinion what is the real cause of war? _____.

v. 2: The Prophet announces how real peace will come. It will come when the world becomes God-centered. As long as it is man-centered there will always be conflict. That is what history teaches us. God however has His arms open to all human beings. When they come to Him they will be at peace with each other. No one can love God without loving his fellow human.

Question: Where must God-centeredness begin, with other people or with myself? _____.

vv. 2-3: The Prophet Isaiah uses the illustration of the mountain on which the city of Jerusalem and its great temple were located. The temple represents God's presence at the center of His people. The Hebrew people of Judea could well understand this illustration. God's mountain must rise high among us, and the sinful human mountains of arrogance and selfishness must be brought low. This means that when God receives first place and His commands are followed, there will be a chance for peace.

vv. 3-4: THREE QUESTIONS

Question: The word "teaching" in verse three tells us that we have a role in establishing God's peace. What is it? _____.

Question: We do not have prophets now. From where can we get guidance to help us in the task of peace-making?

Question: Consider the first word of verse two; God's full peace will come in the last days. Do you agree with the principle that the future gives meaning to the present? _____.

vv. 5-22: THE PROPHET CONDEMNS FOUR SINS

v. 6: Some people are not satisfied with the guidance of God's Word. They want more. So the Hebrews started doing what the Philistines did.

Question: What did the people do? _____.

v. 7: Some people turn away from God as soon as they get some money.

Question: What did the chosen people do? _____.

vv. 11-17: Bashan is a forest area on the east side of the Jordan River. Tarshish is Spain.

Some people think that they can manage ok without God. They think of themselves as gods.

Question: What attitude did these people adopt? _____.

vv. 18-22: Some people think that it is good to have a god as long as it is one that you can see and control.

Question: What did the children of Israel begin to do? _____.

v. 22: We need to reflect on this verse. What is the Prophet telling us? Perhaps he is hinting that human beings are not so great. Without air they will die. They are mortal and limited. It is much wiser to trust God the Creator and what He tells us.

Congratulations on completing this lesson!

LESSON THREE

[This lesson covers chapters three, four, and five of Isaiah]

CHAPTER THREE

Transition Thought: Lesson Two concluded with a description of four sins that had gripped society. This lesson shows the social problems they created.

vv. 1-15: THE LOSS OF LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT

Some people say that the world does not have good leaders any more. The Prophet notes that bad leadership is an aspect of general moral failure. It reflects the weakness of society and then, in turn, increases its evils. Good leadership is as important as bread and water. Hebrew society was crumbling without it.

v. 1: The words "taking away" means that God is allowing these things to happen as punishment for moral failures.

vv. 2-3:

Question: What are the nine categories of leaders listed in this verse: _____.
 _____, _____, _____, _____,
 _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Note: Some of the leaders must have been faithful, but the corruption was everywhere.

vv. 4-5: Modern planes are equipped with autopilots; the plane can travel a short distance while the pilot rests.

Question: Can our society survive on autopilot? _____.

vv. 6-7: Some people complain that the trouble with modern politics is that good people refuse to participate in it. The same was true in Judea.

Question: When somebody is nominated to take charge of the bad situation, what will they say?
 _____.

Question: Is it better to complain about bad situations or to try to resolve them? _____.

v. 8

Question: According to this verse what is the primary reason for social deterioration?
 _____.

v. 9: This verse has great insight -- guilt shows on the face as well as in a person's behavior.

Question: What is the lesson we should learn from this? _____.

v. 10: The prophecy says that good actions produce good results.

v. 12: When Isaiah lived, it was considered a downfall to have rulers who were female or children. Later that view changed.

vv. 13-15

Question: These verses point to a heavy judgment on a specific sin -- what is that sin? _____.

vv. 16-ch. 4, v. 1: THE BEHAVIOUR OF SOME WOMEN

In Hebrew culture at Isaiah's time the formal society leaders were almost always men. Therefore the Prophet now deals with women in a separate section. He makes it clear that their behaviour is also under judgment. The women in Jerusalem were wasting money on needless luxury items. Beauty had become a goddess, and she was worshipped. The prophecy is that all this will be taken away and will be replaced by ruin.

vv. 25-26, and ch.4, v. 1

Question: What is the greatest problem and shame that will befall the women? _____.

CHAPTER FOUR

Imagine that it is monsoon time. Suddenly the electricity fails and the lights go out. There is no sound except wind and rain. It is a familiar situation, and yet there is a sense of danger and fear. But your mother has prepared for this moment in advance. She goes to the table where she has placed a candle and matches. She lights the candle, and there is instant relief.

The warnings that the Prophet has brought are very heavy, and must have produced trembling and fear. So in this brief chapter he lights a candle to give the people hope.

vv. 2-6 THERE WILL BE SURVIVORS

v. 2: The verse says "on that day." We do not know when. Prophets rarely give dates. However, when it comes it will be beautiful. For the chosen people it means that there will be a restoration, and life will be happy.

v. 3

Question: We see the word "holy" in this verse. What are three other common words in Malayalam which, in your opinion, mean the same thing as holy? _____, _____, and _____.

Note: Here the word "holy" is applied to people. In Ch. 1, 4 God is called the Holy One. The meaning is the same. The word has a negative and a positive side. Negatively it means separate from evil. Positively it means loving and righteous.

vv. 4-6

Question: Do you think there is a struggle between good and evil in the world? _____.
If your answer is yes, then the story of Jerusalem and Judea is the story of the world. Their history is like a struggle between good and evil. Will there be survivors? The Prophet gives a resounding YES! Goodness will prevail because the Lord Himself will step in and take action.

Question: What is the picture of salvation in these verses? Verse four says there will be a _____; verse five says there will be a _____; and verse six says we shall have _____.

CHAPTER FIVE

vv. 1-7: THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

A parable is a story with a meaning. Read these seven verses first and then answer the following questions:

Question: Who is the master of the vineyard? _____.

Question: Who is the vineyard? _____.

v. 1

Question: What relation does God want to have with His people? One word: _____.

v. 7

Question: What is the main thing God wants from His people? One word: _____.

vv. 8-23: SOCIAL INJUSTICE

vv. 8-13: There are three marks of unrighteousness that the Prophet condemns.

Question: What is the first mark? _____.

Note: The rich become richer, and the poor become poorer.

Question: What is the second mark? _____.

Note: Alcoholism is increasing in the world today.

Question: What is the third mark? _____.

Note: Religious knowledge is decreasing.

v. 14: Sheol was the Hebrew word for the afterlife. The Prophet pictures it as a fearful animal with an open mouth.

vv. 15-16: What are the two aspects of God's character listed here? _____
and _____.
These two aspects not only tell us what God is like but also what He expects us to be like.

v. 18

Ox-carts were once very common in this area, and you can still see them occasionally. Sometimes they were loaded very high, so that the oxen and driver had to struggle greatly. Suppose that the ox-cart is your life, and the load is the burden of your sin? Aayo! Then suppose that you make the load heavier every day. Aayo and Aayo!!

The people were doing some terrible things. Consider these seven evils:

v. 19: One is that they were actually insulting the Holy One!

Question: What were they saying? _____.

v. 20: A second thing is the fact that they were destroying the conscience of their society.

Question: What were they doing? _____.

vv. 21-23: They were continuing three sins previously mentioned. What are they?
_____, _____, and _____.

v. 24: And there are two additional sins that the Prophet now points out.

Question: What are they? _____ and _____.

SO GOD BECOMES ANGRY. His is a righteous anger. Anger is righteous when behind it lies the desire and intention to save the sinner.

Question: Do you think a father has the right to be angry with his children when they misbehave? _____.

Question: Do you think God the heavenly Father has the right to punish His children when they misbehave? _____.

vv. 26-30: Because of the seriousness of the evils God's punishment is severe. He raises a signal to a nation "far away." The name of the nation is not mentioned here, but we know from Ch. 10, v. 5 that it will be Assyria.

Biblical history teaches us that at times God allowed foreign armies to attack the

chosen people, but it also shows that His purpose is to wake them up and eventually to restore them. God's heart is full of love. Violence is not His way. What His nature and method are will be revealed in the life of His suffering Servant-Saviour. It is the way of self-giving compassion.

It is instructive that the Prophet Isaiah does not once, not even once, call on the Hebrews to conduct a violent response against their enemies. Our task, he teaches, is to reform our behaviour and thereby remove the need for divine rebuke.

The next Lesson describes how Isaiah received the inspiration for his message.

LESSON FOUR

[This lesson covers chapters six, seven, and eight of Isaiah]

CHAPTER SIX

Transition Thought: The spiritual vineyards are unfruitful. It is now the Prophet's task to warn the people of the coming disasters and to give them signs of hope.

vv. 1-13: ISAIAH'S APPOINTMENT AND HIS VOCATION

The first five chapters of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah are a kind of introduction. They give us the main themes of the Book. First, they tell us that Isaiah speaks for God. Secondly, they inform us that God denounces sin but offers hope to those who turn back to Him. Such a prophesy takes courage. How did Isaiah become so brave? It was because of his conviction that God Himself had called and appointed him. In the first verse of the first chapter Isaiah declares that he was granted a special vision of what he was to prophesy. Now in chapter six he gives us the details of that experience.

v. 1: It was about 742 B. C. Isaiah was probably in the great temple in Jerusalem that Solomon had built. Then it happened. Isaiah received an unforgettable vision.

v. 2-4

Question: What did he see? Describe the vision in your own words _____
_____.

Question: What did Isaiah hear? _____.

v. 3: As we have seen, the Hebrew word holy (qadosh) is a very strong word. It does not only signify pure and good but also means separate. God is separate from anything that we can imagine. Nothing can be compared to Him. He is Neti, Neti, not this and not that. God is great, very great and most great. He is the Awesome One Who causes us to tremble, even while He attracts us. Sometimes little children can teach us as well as great prophets. There is a child's prayer that goes like this:

"God is great, God is good,
And we thank Him for our food."

Question: If God is so great why do people sometimes treat Him lightly or even forget Him?
_____.

6: 5-7

Question: Why did Isaiah cry, "Woe is me!"? _____.

Question: Who is the only one who can forgive our sins and take away our guilt? _____.
Later in chapter 53 Isaiah will explain how God does this. For He is not only the Holy One but also God our Saviour.

v. 8: Immediately after he was cleansed Isaiah volunteered for God's service.

vv. 9-10: The message that God gave to Isaiah to deliver was in part a grim one.

Question: What was it? _____.

Note: In the New Testament of the Bible this verse is quoted six times. Please read the Appendix to this Lesson, note A.

vv. 9-10: From the human point of view this command is difficult; it sounds as though the purpose of the Prophet's message will be to worsen the condition of the people. We may wonder why the Lord of Mercy would do that.

We can understand this better if we think of a doctor and a new T. B. patient. The T. B. patient has a cough. But he does not believe that he is very sick. All he wants is some cough medicine. Such a thing happens very often in our medical clinics. Because the doctor knows that the disease is much more serious he refuses to give him cough medicine; rather he tells the man that he must follow the correct anti-T.B. treatment. The foolish patient, however, goes away in disgust. He will have to take his condition much more seriously to survive. He will have to get worse before he can get better.

The people of Judea were like that sick man. They will have to realize what great sinners they are and then repent, so that God can heal them. Their condition must get worse before it can get better. A prophet has to be like a good anti-T. B. specialist and bring people to their senses. "What I am telling you now, you will ignore, and your condition will get worse, but when you realize how sick you are, remember what I told you."

Question: Isaiah wanted to know how long he would have to do this difficult work. What was God's answer? _____.

CHAPTER SEVEN

vv 1-9 THE PROPHET GIVES THE FIRST NAME SIGN

v. 1: The first stage of the disaster begins. Judea and Jerusalem are besieged by two armed forces.

Question: Which were the two armies? _____ and _____.

Note: These two kings had decided to make an alliance against Judea. How sad that one of them was the ruler of Northern Israel. Cousin-brothers against cousin-brothers!

vv. 2-3: Isaiah uses one of his sons to give a sign of hope. His son's name was Shearyashub which means "A remnant shall return." Some of the chosen people who are faithful will be saved.

Question: What command does God give Isaiah? _____.

vv. 4-7

Question: What message was Isaiah to give to King Ahaz? _____.

vv. 10-15 A SECOND NAME-SIGN - IMMANUEL

To strengthen his faith the Prophet gives King Ahaz a second name-sign. It is a sign that opens the door to God's plan of salvation for the whole world.

vv. 10-13: It was now about 735 B.C. Ahaz does not yet seem fully aware that in two years the Assyrian forces will arrive. However, he is beginning to realize that God is speaking through Isaiah, and the conversation shows that he is afraid.

v. 14

Question: What is the sign that God gives through the Prophet? _____.

This is an unusual but powerful sign. There will be a special mother and child. The mother's name is not given. The Hebrew word for a young woman of marriageable age is used. However, the Prophet announces the child's name, the highest possible name. It is a combination of immanu, which means "with us," and el which means "God."

Question: So then what does Immanuel mean? _____.

Who is this child? In the immediate sense it may refer to such a person as the future king Hezekiah who was born about this time. The name indicates that God will be with him and the people of Judea.

In the second and greater meaning the child refers to the Saviour who is coming at a later time.

A prophecy can have a double meaning: one that applies to the present and one that applies to the future. Consider an example from everyday life. There is a coconut farmer who raises seedlings. He confidently says : "That young plant over there will produce fruit!" But in its first producing year the young coconut tree brings forth only a single fruit. Then, seven years later, it produces a huge harvest. An immediate meaning and a future meaning. A child will be born of a young woman, the prophet says. Before it is 3-4 years old devastation will strike Judea -- that is the immediate meaning. Much later another child will be born of a virgin mother, who will be the Saviour from sin. His salvation will be like a huge harvest of spiritual fruit.

Please read the Appendix, note B.

Question: Have you ever eaten curds and honey? _____.

That was the food of nomads. It was not the normal food in Judea. The child will eat that food because the land will lie uncultivated and the markets will be destroyed.

vv. 17-25 THE DEVASTATION BEGINS

vv. 17-18

Question: Who will descend on Judea? _____ and _____.

vv. 21-25

Question: What will happen to the farms and vineyards in Judea? _____.

Note: The River refers to the Euphrates which runs through Assyria.

CHAPTER EIGHT

vv. 1-4 A THIRD NAME-SIGN!

Isaiah now gives another name to one of his sons. It is quite different from Shearyashub and Immanuel, the first two signs. This is a name of warning which means "speeding to the prey and hastening to the spoil."

vv. 1-2

Question: What is the name? _____.

v. 4

Question: What is the prediction that this sign gives the king? _____.

v. 3

Question: What is the interesting thing we learn about Isaiah's wife? _____.

Maybe this is the reason she agreed to give such a name to her son!!

vv. 5-22 JUDEA NOW HAS A CLEAR CHOICE

vv. 5-8: Shiloh was a quiet stream that gave water to Jerusalem. God's spiritual water is gentle, life-giving and refreshes our life. The waters of human evil can be like a terrible and destructive flood. Assyria was like such a flood. The choice seems plain.

Question: Do you agree that we have a choice between good and evil? _____.

Question: Who was the son of Remaliah (see ch. 7, v. 1)? _____.

Question: In these verses Isaiah is also giving the king and his people a reminder of the second name-sign: once again, write what Immanuel means. _____.

vv. 9-22: When the invasions come, people will have different temptations. The invaders will be tempted by pride. The children of Israel will be tempted to seek magical help in their despair. The Prophet himself will be tempted by loneliness and apprehension.

vv. 9-10

Question: What does God advise the nations? _____.

vv. 11-18

Question: What does God advise the Prophet? Summarize in your words. _____.

Question: How does the Prophet respond to God's admonition? Give the two key phrases. _____ and _____ (see v. 17).

vv. 19-22

Question: What does God say about the Hebrews who consult spirits? _____.

We can learn a lot from Isaiah's response to God's encouragement. When things do not go well with us, we should do two things: first, ask the Lord God for help, and second, be confident that He will provide it.

At the end of most Lessons you will find an Appendix: "Isaiah in the New Testament." Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. Jesus is regarded as the Fulfilment of Isaiah's prophesy of a coming Saviour.

APPENDIX

Isaiah in the New Testament:

Note A

Isaiah 6, 8-10: The New Testament reference is Matthew 1, 21. The Messiah Jesus met the same problem as the prophets. The people did not listen. They did not realize how sick they were. Even though He was "the Great Physician," Jesus could not help them until they attained self-awareness. The name Jesus means: "He shall save His people from their sins."

Note B

Isaiah 7, 14: The New Testament reference is Matthew 1, 23. It tells us that Isaiah 7, 14 is a prophesy of the birth of Jesus the Messiah. That is what the angel Gabriel informed Joseph who was betrothed to Mary. Mary is the virgin mother and Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. God Himself is our Saviour.