

# ISAIAH

## Introduction

### *The book of Isaiah*

*With the name of Isaiah we have a collection of prophetic writings that actually have several authors. Looking at close range we distinguish three parts: Isaiah I, from 1–39; Isaiah II, “The Book of Consolation,” from 40–45; Isaiah III, from 56–66.*

### *The prophet Isaiah*

*Born towards the year 760, he received his prophetic vocation in 739; he lived in an agitated and decisive time, with the destruction of the Northern kingdom and the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. In his prophesy he announces the arrival of a savior, a new just king that will heal the wounds of Israel and will conduct them in the path of the Lord. This announcement, that made reference to the successor of the impious king Ahaz, gives wings to Isaiah for dreaming about a future time of peace and blessing, expressed in marvelous poetic images, and that was taken later on as announcement about the future Messiah, the definitive Savior of Israel.*

## ISAIAH I

### Vocation of Isaiah

**6**<sup>1</sup>In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; the train of his robe filled the Temple. <sup>2</sup>Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: two to cover the face, two to cover the feet, and two to fly with.

<sup>3</sup>They were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth.  
All the earth is filled with his Glory!”

<sup>4</sup>At the sound of their voices the foundations of the threshold shook and the Temple was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>I said:

—Poor me! I am doomed!  
For I am a man of unclean lips  
living among a people of unclean lips,  
and yet I have seen the King,  
Yahweh Sabaoth.

<sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphs flew to me; in his hands was a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup>He touched my mouth with it and said:

—See, this has touched your lips;  
your guilt is taken away  
and your sin is forgiven.

<sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord:

—Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?

I answered:

—Here I am. Send me!

## BOOK ABOUT IMMANUEL

### Second advice: the sign of Immanuel

**7** <sup>10</sup>Once again Yahweh addressed Ahaz:

<sup>11</sup>—Ask for a sign from Yahweh your God, let it come either from the deepest depths or from the heights of heaven.

<sup>12</sup>But Ahaz answered:

—I will not ask, I will not put Yahweh to the test.

<sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said:

—Now listen, descendants of David.

Have you not been satisfied trying the patience of people, that you also try the patience of my God? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:

The Virgin is with child  
and bears a son,  
and calls his name  
Immanuel.

### Messianic prophesy

**9** <sup>1</sup>The people who walk in darkness  
have seen a great light.

A light has dawned  
on those who live in the land  
of the shadow of death.

<sup>2</sup>You have enlarged the nation;  
you have increased their joy.  
They rejoice before you,  
as people rejoice at harvest time  
as they rejoice in dividing the spoil.

<sup>3</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressors,  
you have broken it as on the day of Midian.

<sup>4</sup>Every warrior's boot that tramped in war,  
every cloak rolled in blood,  
will be thrown out for burning,  
will serve as fuel for the fire.

<sup>5</sup>For a child is born to us,  
a son is given us;  
the royal ornament is laid upon his shoulder,  
and his name is proclaimed:  
“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

<sup>6</sup>To the increase of his powerful rule  
in peace, there will be no end.  
Vast will be his dominion,  
he will reign on David's throne  
and over all his kingdom,  
to establish and uphold it  
with justice and righteousness  
from this time onward and forever.  
The zealous love of Yahweh Sabaoth  
will do this.

## Messianic peace

**11** <sup>1</sup>From the stump of Jesse a shoot will come forth;  
from his roots a branch will grow and bear fruit.  
<sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him—  
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a Spirit of counsel and power,  
a Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.  
<sup>3</sup>Not by appearances will he judge,  
nor by what is said must he decide,  
<sup>4</sup>but with justice he will judge the poor  
and with righteousness  
decide for the meek.  
Like a rod, his word will strike the oppressor,  
and the breath of his lips slay the wicked.  
<sup>5</sup>Justice will be the girdle of his waist,  
truth the girdle of his loins.  
<sup>6</sup>The wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
the leopard will rest beside the kid,  
the calf and the lion cub will feed together  
and a little child will lead them.  
<sup>7</sup>Befriending each other, the cow and the bear  
will see their young ones lie down together.  
Like cattle, the lion will eat hay.  
<sup>8</sup>By the cobra's den the infant will play.  
The child will put his hand  
into the viper's lair.  
<sup>9</sup>No one will harm or destroy  
over my holy mountain,  
for as water fills the sea  
the earth will be filled  
with the knowledge of the Lord.

## Return to Zion

**35** <sup>1</sup>Let the wilderness and the arid land rejoice,

the desert be glad and blossom.  
<sup>2</sup>Covered with flowers,  
it sings and shouts with joy,  
adorned with the splendor of Lebanon,  
the magnificence of Carmel and Sharon.  
They, my people, see the glory of Yahweh,  
the majesty of our God.  
<sup>3</sup>Give vigor to weary hands  
and strength to enfeebled knees.  
<sup>4</sup>Say to those who are afraid:  
“Have courage, do not fear.  
See, your God comes, demanding justice.  
He is the God who rewards,  
the God who comes to save you.”  
<sup>5</sup>Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unsealed.  
<sup>6</sup>Then will the lame leap as a hart  
and the tongue of the dumb sing and shout.  
For water will break out in the wilderness  
and streams gush forth from the desert.  
<sup>7</sup>The thirsty ground will become a pool,  
the arid land springs of water.  
In the haunts where once reptiles lay,  
grass will grow with reeds and rushes.  
<sup>8</sup>There will be a highway  
which will be called The Way of Holiness;  
no one unclean will pass over it  
nor any wicked fool stray there.  
<sup>9</sup>No lion will be found there  
nor any beast of prey.  
Only the redeemed will walk there.  
<sup>10</sup>For the ransomed of Yahweh will return:  
**with everlasting joy upon their heads,**  
they will come to Zion singing,  
gladness and joy marching with them,  
while sorrow and sighing flee away.

## ISAIAH II

### *Introduction*

*In this book appears the mysterious figure of the “Servant of Yahweh,” a personage chosen by God for the salvation of the people; this person does not have regal attributes, neither power, but it is the “suffering servant,” who takes upon himself the sins of the people and suffers for them. In this mysterious figure the Church has seen the announcement of Jesus that will not be a triumphant King Messiah, but the one who will give his life until death for the salvation of all.*

## The Good News

**40**<sup>1</sup>Be comforted, my people,  
be strengthened, says your God.  
<sup>2</sup>Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, proclaim to her  
that her time of bondage is at an end,  
that her guilt has been paid for,  
that from the hand of Yahweh  
she has received double punishment  
for all her iniquity.  
<sup>3</sup>A voice cries:  
—In the wilderness prepare the way for Yahweh.  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Every valley will be raised up;  
every mountain and hill will be laid low.  
The stumbling blocks shall become level  
and the rugged places smooth.  
<sup>5</sup>The glory of Yahweh will be revealed,  
and all mortals together will see it;  
for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”  
<sup>6</sup>A voice says: ‘Cry.’  
and I say: ‘What shall I cry?’  
All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty as the flower of the field.  
<sup>10</sup>Here comes your God with might;  
his strong arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and here before him is his booty.  
<sup>11</sup>Like a shepherd he tends his flock:  
he gathers the lambs in his arms,  
he carries them in his bosom,  
gently leading those that are with young.

## First servant song: God presents his servant

**42**<sup>1</sup>Here is my servant whom I uphold,  
my chosen one in whom I delight.  
I have put my spirit upon him,  
and he will bring justice to the nations.  
<sup>2</sup>He does not shout or raise his voice  
proclamations are not heard in the streets.  
<sup>3</sup>A broken reed he will not crush,  
nor will he snuff out the light  
of the wavering wick.  
He will make justice appear in truth.  
<sup>4</sup>He will not waver or be broken  
until he has established

justice on earth;  
the islands are waiting for his law.

<sup>5</sup>Thus says God, Yahweh,  
who created the heavens  
and stretched them out,  
who spread the earth  
and all that comes from it,  
who gives life and breath  
to those who walk on it:  
<sup>6</sup>I, Yahweh,  
have called you for the sake of justice;  
I will hold your hand  
to make you firm;  
I will make you as a covenant to the people,  
and as a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup>to open eyes that do not see,  
to free captives from prison,  
to bring out to light  
those who sit in darkness.  
<sup>8</sup>I am Yahweh, that is my name,  
I will not give my glory to another;  
or my praise to graven images.  
<sup>9</sup>See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things do I declare:  
before they spring forth I tell you of them.

## **Second servant song: the mission**

**49** <sup>1</sup>Listen to me, O islands,  
pay attention, peoples from distant lands.  
Yahweh called me from my mother's womb;  
he pronounced my name before I was born.  
<sup>2</sup>He made my mouth like a sharpened sword.  
He hid me in the shadow of his hand.  
He made me into a polished arrow  
set apart in his quiver.  
<sup>3</sup>He said to me: You are Israel, my servant,  
Through you I will be known.  
<sup>4</sup>'I have labored in vain,' I thought  
and spent my strength for nothing.  
Yet what is due me was in the hand of Yahweh,  
and my reward was with my God.  
I am important in the sight of Yahweh,  
and my God is my strength.  
<sup>5</sup>And now Yahweh has spoken,  
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,

to gather Israel to him.  
6He said: 'It is not enough  
that you be my servant,  
to restore the tribes of Jacob,  
to bring back the remnant of Israel.  
I will make you the light of the nations,  
that my salvation will reach  
to the ends of the earth.

### **Third servant song: suffering and trust**

**50** 4The Lord Yahweh has taught me  
so I speak as his disciple  
and I know how to sustain the weary.  
Morning after morning he wakes me up  
to hear, to listen like a disciple.  
5The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.  
I have not rebelled,  
nor have I withdrawn.  
6I offered my back to those who strike me,  
my cheeks to those who pulled my beard;  
neither did I shield my face  
from blows, spittle and disgrace.  
7I have not despaired,  
for the Lord Yahweh comes to my help.  
So, like a flint I set my face,  
knowing that I will not be disgraced.  
8He who avenges me is near.  
Who then will accuse me?  
Let us confront each other.  
Who is now my accuser?  
Let him approach.  
9If the Lord Yahweh is my help,  
who will condemn me?  
All of them will wear out like cloth;  
the moth will devour them.

### **Fourth servant song: passion and glory**

**52** 13It is now when my servant will succeed;  
he will be exalted and highly praised.  
14Just as many have been horrified  
at his disfigured appearance:  
'Is this a man? He does not look like one,'  
15so will nations be astounded,  
kings will stand speechless,

for they will see something never told,  
they will witness something never heard of.

**53** <sup>1</sup>Who could believe what we have heard,  
and to whom has Yahweh revealed his feat?  
<sup>2</sup>Like a root out of dry ground,  
like a sapling he grew up before us,  
with nothing attractive in his appearance,  
no beauty, no majesty.  
<sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected,  
a man of sorrows familiar with grief,  
a man from whom people hide their face,  
spurned and considered of no account.  
<sup>4</sup>Yet ours were the sorrows he bore,  
ours were the sufferings he endured,  
although we considered him as one  
punished by God, stricken and brought low.  
<sup>5</sup>Destroyed because of our sins,  
he was crushed for our wickedness.  
Through his punishment we are made whole;  
by his wounds we are healed.  
<sup>6</sup>Like sheep we had all gone astray,  
each following his own way;  
but Yahweh laid upon him all our guilt.  
<sup>7</sup>He was harshly treated,  
but unresisting and silent, he humbly submitted.  
Like a lamb led to the slaughter  
or a sheep before the shearer  
he did not open his mouth.  
<sup>8</sup>He was taken away to detention and judgment—  
what an unthinkable fate!  
He was cut off from the land of the living,  
stricken for his people's sin.  
<sup>9</sup>They made his tomb with the wicked,  
they put him in the graveyard of the oppressors,  
though he had done no violence nor spoken in deceit.  
<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of Yahweh to crush him with grief.  
When he makes himself an offering for sin,  
he will have a long life and see his descendants.  
Through him the will of Yahweh is done.  
<sup>11</sup>For the anguish he suffered,  
he will see the light and obtain perfect knowledge.  
My just servant will justify the multitude;  
he will bear and take away their guilt.  
<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong.  
For he surrendered himself to death  
and was even counted among the wicked,  
bearing the sins of the multitude  
and interceding for sinners.

## ISAIAH III

### *Introduction*

*We practically know nothing about this prophet whom we call Isaiah III; it is not even clear that the following chapters belong to the same one author. The core message seems to come from a prophet that acts shortly after the restoration of Judah, amidst the poverty and disillusionment of the returning exiles. It is obvious that he imitates Isaiah II. Characteristic of this collection is its eschatological character that is looking towards a definitive future.*

### **The light of the New Jerusalem**

**60** <sup>1</sup>Arise, shine, for your light has come.  
The Glory of Yahweh rises upon you.  
<sup>2</sup>Night still covers the earth  
and gloomy clouds veil the peoples,  
but Yahweh now rises  
and over you his glory appears.  
<sup>3</sup>Nations will come to your light  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
<sup>4</sup>Lift up your eyes round about and see:  
they are all gathered and come to you,  
your sons from afar,  
your daughters tenderly carried.  
<sup>5</sup>This sight will make your face radiant,  
your heart throbbing and full;  
the riches of the sea will be turned to you,  
the wealth of the nations will come to you.  
<sup>6</sup>A flood of camels will cover you,  
caravans from Midian and Ephah.  
Those from Sheba will come,  
bringing with them gold and incense,  
all singing in praise of Yahweh.

### **Mission of the prophet**

**61** <sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me,  
because Yahweh has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up broken hearts,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
freedom to those languishing in prison;  
<sup>2</sup>to announce the year of Yahweh's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God;

to give comfort to all who grieve;  
3(to comfort those who mourn in Zion)  
and give them a garland instead of ashes,  
oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
and festal clothes instead of despair.

## **New creation**

**65** 17I now create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind again.

18Be glad forever and rejoice in what I create; for I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight. 19I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people.

The sound of distress and the voice of weeping will not be heard in it any more.

20You will no longer know of dead children or of adults who do not live out a lifetime. One who reaches a hundred years will have died a mere youth, but one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.