Background to Isaiah
—Page 1, Isaiah’s ministry, Judah’s kings

This page will support your studies of Isaiah with some useful background to the book.

1 Isaiah’s ministry

The book of Isaiah belongs to the latter days of the divided kingdom. Isaiah was a preacher and prophet to the smaller kingdom of Judah. Its capital city was Jerusalem (Zion). Isaiah helped to prevent Judah’s captivity and exile by Assyria when the Assyrian king Sennacherib invaded the land during Hezekiah’s reign (2Kings 17-20, 2Chronicles 26-32, Isaiah 36-39). However Isaiah’s ministry began 47 years earlier in the last year of king Uzziah, Hezekiah’s great grandfather (Isaiah 6:1,8). Isaiah’s work spanned the reigns of four kings in Judah (Isaiah 1:1).

2 Kings of Juda in Isaiah’s Time

Isaiah prophesied in the days of the last four kings of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, also called Zion. All were good kings except Ahaz. Note the mentions of Isaiah in 2Kgs 18-20 and 2Chronicles 26:22, 2Chronicles 32:20-32.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kings of Judah in Isaiah’s Time (Isaiah 36-39)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uzziah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jotham</td>
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<td>Ahaz</td>
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<td>Hezekiah</td>
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*Note: Assyria captured the neighbouring kingdom of Israel, also known as Ephraim (2Kings 17)

3 Facts About the Kings

Uzziah

- A good king in Jerusalem.
- Also called Azariah.
- Became king at 16 years of age.
- His father Amaziah was murdered at Lachish southwest of Jerusalem.
- Uzziah sought God in the days of Zechariah.
- Rebuilt Elath (Ezion-geber) south of Judah (1Kings 9:26).
- Conquered the Phillistines and their towns along Judah’s western border.
- Conquered the Meunites (Simeon’s territory 2Chronicles 4:39-43).
- See 2Chronicles 26:1, 2Kings 14:21.

**Jotham**

- Son of Uzziah (above).
- A good king in Jerusalem.
- He "ordered his ways before the Lord".
- Became king at 25 years of age.
- Conquered the Ammonites.
- Encountered opposition from Syria and Israel.

**Ahaz**

- Son of Jotham (above).
- A bad king in Jerusalem.
- He worshipped idols.
- Became king at 20 years of age.
- Isaiah counselled him (Isaiah 7).
- In his reign Judah was attacked from all sides.

**Hezekiah**

- Son of Ahaz (above).
- One of the best kings in Jerusalem.
- He destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because it had become an idol.
- Became king at 25 years of age.
- Israel fell to Assyria in his reign, but Hezekiah’s prayers saved Judah, and Isaiah encouraged him.
- Hezekiah was dying, but God answered his prayers, granting him fifteen more years of life.
- See 2Chronicles 29-32, 2Kings 18-20.
Hoshea

- King of Israel in 12th year of Ahaz’s reign in Judah.
- A bad king and the last to reign over Israel.
- A vassal of, and paying annual tribute to, Shalmaneser king of Assyria.
- Conspired with Egypt’s king against Assyria.
- Was discovered and imprisoned by Shalmaneser.
- Samaria his capital was overthrown.
- Israel taken into exile.
- See 2Kings 17.