Intro: The Prophet of the King

Isaiah the Prophet served as a prophet during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. His main service was to THE king, The LORD God of Hosts. The Prophet’s role is to serve the Lord of Hosts by challenging/inspiring/judging the kings of the House of Judah.

The purpose of the book centers around the vision of God for Judah and Israel and the world. The ideal is that the reign of God on Earth would begin with Israel and draw the nations of the world into the Kingdom’s blessing. The ultimate vision and earthly reality are two different things. Isaiah holds out the hope of the ideal of Kingdom expansion under the reign of the God of Hosts, while sternly pronouncing judgment on the present sinful state of affairs.

<table>
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<th>Kings of Judah</th>
<th>Years of Reign</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uzziah</td>
<td>767-740 b.c.</td>
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<td>Jotham</td>
<td>750-735</td>
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<td>Ahaz</td>
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<td>Hezekiah</td>
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The dramatic announcement of the Book of Isaiah is that The LORD God of Hosts will bear his arm as a paradoxical suffering servant and an anointed conqueror. The general literary shape of the book of Isaiah bears this out.

37 Isaiah literary structure outlines are taken from J Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and a Commentary (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1993)
In the first section (chapters 1-37), the prophet Isaiah argues that Israel's hope is not to be in foreign kings and alliances of their choosing, but rather they should place their hope in the Davidic Messiah and the YHWH as their King.

But what happens when the Davidic line ceases to hope in the LORD? In 36-37, the narrative of Hezekiah's prayer and resistance of the Assyrian King Sennacherib shows strong faith in YHWH over false gods and foreign alliances.

But in chapters 38-39, Hezekiah's faith in the LORD falters. He is given a reprieve from his own death because of his faith in YHWH and yet he still selfishly and foolishly falters in the face of the coming Babylonian Crisis. Because of the sin of Judah's Kings even Jerusalem would fall to Babylon. Isaiah has been warning of this all along. But the Hezekiah narrative serves to give the historical confirmation that the prophesy is true. Hezekiah made a Fatal Choice to trust in envoys of Babylon for personal protection rather than the Lord.

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: 6 the time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. 7 And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” --Isaiah 39:5-7

Again, what is Israel to do? Where is their hope from the depths of exile to Babylon with Jerusalem destroyed?

God has a plan for the liberation of Israel from bondage to Babylon, his plan includes a Gentile liberator they are not expecting: Cyrus of Persia. But even greater than Israel's liberation from earthly bondage will be the universal atonement for sins of the world offered through the Suffering Servant of the Lord!
Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the
everlasting God, the
Creator of the ends of
the earth.

He will not grow tired
or weary, and his
understanding no one
can fathom. He gives
strength to the weary
and increases the power
of the weak.

Even youths grow tired
and weary, and young
men stumble and
fall; but those who hope
in the LORD will renew
their strength. They will
soar on wings like
eagles; they will run and
not grow weary, they
will walk and not be
faint.

—Isaiah 40:28-31

**Universal Consolation (40-42)**
The vision of Isaiah has always been global with Israel as central to
God’s plan for the world. (Cf. Isaiah 2:2) But the global realization will
only follow great distress. The earthly city of God, Jerusalem, will be
laid in desolation by the Babylonian crisis. Into this desolation, Isaiah
speaks a word of consolation—first to Israel, then to the nations.

The LORD will return and gather his people through an earthly agent
of liberation—the consolation of Israel (40:1–41:29). Israel will be
delivered at YHWH’s hand through the agency of the “stirred up one
from the east whom victory meets at every step” (41:2) This is the
LORD’s doing, so look to him for deliverance. For, there is no hope in
any idols. YHWH is the comforter of his people (41:21-29).

But God will also bring hope and consolation to the nations through
his "chosen servant" who is anointed of the Spirit (42:1-42:17):

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,*
*my chosen, in whom my soul delights;*
*I have put my Spirit upon him;*
*he will bring forth justice to the nations. Is. 42:1*
Promises of Redemption (42:18-44:23)

The Servant of the Lord, the anointed of the Spirit will arise from within Israel. So the first step to the Servant of the Lord's coming will be a new Exodus. The Lord will redeem his people from their bondage (42:18-43:21) and he will forgive their sins (43:22-44:23).

Just like the first exodus, the liberation from Babylon will require both a liberation from earthly bondage:

Thus says the LORD,  
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
“For your sake I send to Babylon  
and bring them all down as fugitives,  
even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice.  
15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
the Creator of Israel, your King.”

16 Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
who brings forth chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick.

Isaiah 43:14-16

Yet, just like the exodus of old, physical liberation was insufficient. Israel grumbled against the Lord in the wilderness because of their lack of trust in the LORD. Israel needed not only liberation but also forgiveness of sins. The LORD promises that he will not only forgive their sins but anoint them with his Holy Spirit.

“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions  
for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins....  
For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. Isa. 43:23; 44:3

Isaiah 43:22
Agents of Redemption (44:24-53:12)
The promises of redemption proclaimed in verses 42:18-44:23 will be brought about by the agents of redemption identified in chapters 44:24-53:12.

Cyrus: Liberation (44:24-48:22)
The Promise of Liberation from Babylonian captivity and exile will be brought about by a Gentile deliverer king named Cyrus.

"[I am the LORD] who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’; 27 who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’; 28 who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’" --Isaiah 44:26-28

He says to Cyrus, "'I call you by name, though you do not know me...I equip you though you do not know me." The LORD will use an instrument of his choosing to liberate his people and provide for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (45:13). There may be some critique of the LORD's plan in this. "What are you making?" (45:9) Yet the LORD's response is that he makes everything--even Gentile Kings! (45:12) He is the LORD of hosts. Babylon and its proud idols will be humiliated (46:1-47:15).
The Bible Challenge

The Servant: Atonement (49:1-53:12)

But there will be an even greater agent who will be raised up by the arm of the LORD. This agent will forgive the sins of not only Israel, but of the nations of the world, Isaiah 49:7:

Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,
the servant of rulers:
“Kings shall see and arise;
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

This agent would not come in military might, but in weakness and humility. He will be one who will bear sins on his personhood and in his death. He will be the one who takes away the wrath of God from all who will put their hope in him (51:22). The announcement of his coming will be called "good news" (52:7):

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring;
he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.
12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.--Is. 53:10-12

The universal salvation will lead to universal proclamation to the people of the world! (54:1-55:13)