

## Isaiah

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at [www.openarms-communityofchrist.org](http://www.openarms-communityofchrist.org).*

Isaiah is the first of the books called “The Prophets” in the Hebrew scriptures. This is the second main section of the scriptures—the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). These are the books that Jesus referred to when he talked about “the Law and the Prophets.”

While the books of the Law provided the foundation for faith; the prophets worked to move the people into a present-tense faith, living into a yet-unfulfilled future. They generally advocate just social relations and a pure worship of God that provide an alternative to dominant modes of both relationships and religion.

While for many years the book of Isaiah was considered to be the work of one writer, current scholarship believes there were three writers, writing during different time periods.

Chapters 1-39 (First Isaiah) are the only part of the book that can definitely be dated to Isaiah’s time, 741-701 BC. They begin with Isaiah’s memoirs and then are followed by prophecies against foreign and domestic enemies. His primary focus is on attacking social injustice, believing that shows how tenuous Judah’s relationship is with God.

Chapters 40-55 are commonly called Second Isaiah and come from the time immediately before the fall of Babylon in 539 BC to the next generation. This writer emphasized the significance of historical events as God’s plan—a plan that goes from creation to redemption and beyond.

The final chapters, 56-66, are often called Third Isaiah, and may be dated from 530-510 BC. This section contains messages of God’s comfort to those who are afflicted, but there is also awareness of the challenges of living together in community.

The entire book presents a vision of the hope of God’s people in a world whose times are in God’s hands. In Community of Christ, this vision finds expression in the church seal drawn from the words of Isaiah 11: “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them....They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”