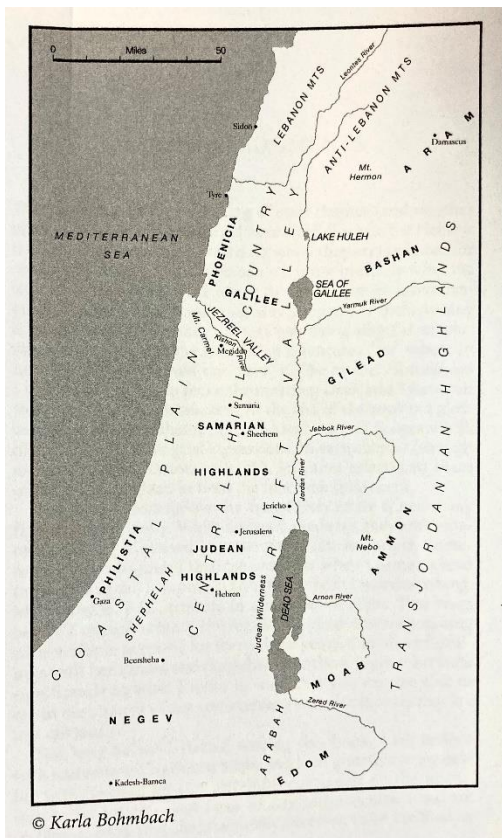


You who bring good news to Zion,  
 go up on a high mountain.  
 You who bring good news to Jerusalem,  
 lift up your voice with a shout,  
 lift it up, do not be afraid;  
 say to the towns of Judah,  
 'Here is your God!' (Isaiah 40:9)

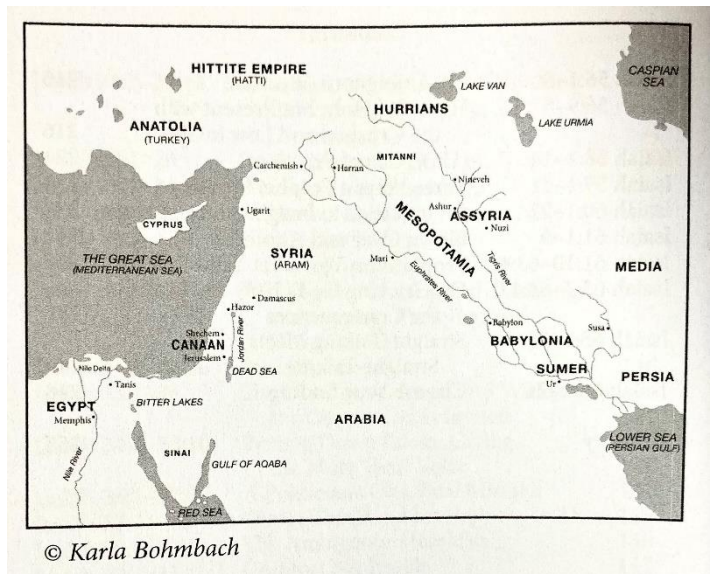
**Why preach on Isaiah?**

The Book of Isaiah is full of good news, so much so that it's sometimes even called the "Fifth Gospel", with only the Psalms (79 times) being directly quoted from more in the New Testament than Isaiah (66 times). It was even via the LXX (Septuagint) that the term 'gospel' was given, using the common words available to charge with profound new theological insight. When Jesus started his ministry (Lk. 4:16-21) he stood up to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Augustine remarked that "The new [testament] is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed." And so following Jesus' resurrection, the church understood in a greater measure who He is through the Old Testament (cf. Luke 24:27, 32, 45). There is a richness for us to explore the good news of Jesus in Isaiah, and how the Spirit still speaks through this text!

**Who was Isaiah? When did he live? Where did he live?**



Isaiah prophesied for about sixty years (740-700 BC) in the southern kingdom of Judah. His contemporaries were Amos, Hosea and Micah. During this time the northern kingdom, Israel, was conquered by the Assyrians and many Israelites were taken into exile (722 BC). Throughout this time Isaiah clearly had the ear of kings. He confronted Ahaz (7:3); Hezekiah sends for him in a time of great trouble (37:2); and he was commissioned as a prophet in the year Uzziah died (6:1).



**Kings of Judah in Isaiah's time:**

Uzziah	769-740
Jotham	740-732
Ahaz	732-716
Hezekiah	716-687

Important events happening after Isaiah's death: (*dates are approximate*)

- 745 Tiglath-Pileser III comes to power in Assyria.
- 734 Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus formed a defensive alliance and try to persuade Ahaz to join them.
- 732 Fall of Damascus.
- 722 Fall of Samaria.
- 705 Sargon II King of Assyria dies. Sennacherib succeeds to Assyrian throne.
- 612 Fall of Nineveh. Assyrian empire conquered by Babylon.
- 605 Battle of Carchemish. Daniel and others exiled to Babylon.
- 587 Jerusalem falls to Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar II). More Jews exiled to Babylon.
- 539 Babylon falls to Persia under King Cyrus.
- 538 onwards - exiles begin to return, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah) and the temple (Ezra).
- 516 Jerusalem temple completed.

From Isaiah's personal sense of call from the Holy Lord, to the political upheaval from the year King Uzziah died, throughout the geopolitical tensions over several generations (Aram, Assyria, Babylon and Persia), Isaiah forthtells and foretells good news. It's a book big in size, in timescale, and in its theology – one commentator referring to it as the “Romans” of the Old Testament.

### **What might be tricky?**

A lot the events mentioned in Isaiah happened after Isaiah died. Either that's prophetic foretelling or someone else wrote it. It'll be good to grapple with this as we preach, whilst being honest about what we don't know. In examining the context and authorship we can examine a couple of commentaries and quickly realise the spectrum of opinion. Was there just one man called Isaiah or more than a dozen people in a 'school of Isaiah'? The text does reasonably break into sections 1-39 (Proto-Isaiah), 40-55 (Deutero-Isaiah) and 56-66 (Trito-Isaiah), but I'm yet to come across anyone contending for three different 'Isaiah's'! When Jesus read in Luke 4, 'the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him', no mention of which part or which 'Isaiah'. It's healthy in our teaching to be open about what we can't know for sure, as it is giving assurance in what we can. I'm convinced in the theological unity that God intends for us to receive as his Word. In whatever way the Book of Isaiah has come to us today let's be certain it is Holy Spirit inspired.

The other thing that's tricky is that it's a long book! We won't be able to cover every chapter and verse, but we will draw upon major gospel themes, and hopefully inspire listeners to read Isaiah for themselves.

### How might God use the Book of Isaiah in our life together here at SMB?

As we go about our preaching in the term ahead, I share with you seven reasons why we need this book (taken from Tim Chester, *Isaiah For You*, p.9-10):

1. *Isaiah enlarges our view of God.* Isaiah gives us a rich vision of an eternal God of overwhelming holiness, with a passion for his glory, who shapes the course of history, fights for justice, comes to rescue his people and dwells among the lowly.
2. *Isaiah enriches our love for Christ.* Many of our favourite Christmas and Easter readings come from Isaiah because Isaiah presents a vivid portrait of Jesus as the Spirit-empowered Messiah who reigns in justice and the faithful Servant who saves through suffering.
3. *Isaiah sharpens our understanding of Salvation.* Isaiah provides a clear picture of the saving work of Christ as an act of liberation modelled on the exodus from Egypt and as an act of substitution through which Christ pays the penalty for our sin.
4. *Isaiah illuminates our Bible reading.* By seeing the exodus from Egypt as a blueprint for the ultimate deliverance of God's people, Isaiah massively shaped the New Testament understanding of Christ and thereby helps us read the Old Testament story as our story.
5. *Isaiah comforts our fears and sorrows.* Isaiah brought comfort to people facing major threats and big disappointments, and so points us to the rest and peace that come from entrusting ourselves to God.
6. *Isaiah excites our vision for the church.* Isaiah gives a delightful vision of the church as a community of justice, clothed in divine splendour, which brings light to the world and draws the nations to the ways of the Lord.
7. *Isaiah fuels our commitment to mission.* He invites us to lift our eyes from our parochial concerns to see God gathering people from the four corners of the world through the global mission of the church.

### Preaching through *Isaiah's Good News* this Summer 2024

AM	Notes	Title – Isaiah's Good News	Passage	Speaker
14-Apr		A Holy God and a Holy call	Isaiah 6	Stephen
21-Apr		Light in the darkness	Isaiah 8:19 – 9:7	Joy Atkins
28-Apr		A King forever	Isaiah 11	Shiela Porter
05-May		A joy to shout about	Isaiah 35	Gareth D
12-May	Mission Sunday	To the ends of the earth	Isaiah 49:1-23	Lisa Muerasse
19-May	Pentecost WCS Youth - Baptism	The Spirit of the Lord	Isaiah 61	Megan/YP
26-May		A God unrivalled	Isaiah 40	Charmaine
02-Jun		A Chosen Servant	Isaiah 42:1-9	Joy Dunton
09-Jun		A Lord worth listening to	Isaiah 48	Steve Lillicrap
16-Jun		A Suffering Servant	Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12	Peter Ould
23-Jun		Redemption everlasting	Isaiah 54	Stephen
30-Jun		An invitation	Isaiah 55	Joy Dunton
07-Jul		For the poor	Isaiah 58	Nina
14-Jul		A glorious future	Isaiah 65:17 - 25	Charmaine

**The following resources are available for borrowing from Stephen:**

Chester, Tim (2021) *Isaiah For You*; The Good Book Company.

Goldingay, John (2015) *Isaiah for Everyone*; SPCK.

Hacking, Philip (1994) *Isaiah: Free to Suffer and to Serve*; Crossway Books.

Jackman, David (2010) *Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher*; Proclamation Trust.

Motyer, Alec (1999) *Isaiah*; IVP.

Webb, Barry (1996) *The Message of Isaiah* (Bible Speaks Today series); IVP.