

# Isaiah

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## The Authorship and Dating

Internal evidence claims that Isaiah the Son of Amoz (1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 20:2; 37:2, 21; 28:1) is the author. Isaiah is also mentioned 10 more times (7:3; 20:3; 37:5,6; 38:1, 4, 21; 39:3, 5, 8). Jewish tradition supports Isaiah as the author of the book that bears his name. For example Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (11.1.1.2) indicates men read Isaiah's predictions of Cyrus to Cyrus himself.<sup>1</sup>

While tradition accepts Isaiah as a single book written by a single author, modern scholarship often rejects a single author for three major reasons: 1) Isaiah must have been written after Cyrus because of the impossibility (modernity's presupposition) of prediction (Isaiah 44-45). 2) There is a difference in style between chapters 1-39 and 40-66. 3) Since passages address a deserted Jerusalem (44:26; 58:12; 61:4; 63:18; 64:10) and exiles (40:21, 26, 28; 43:10; 48:8; 50:10; 51:6, 12) the same passages must be considered as ones that date the book to that particular period. However, much evidence remains for the book's unity as well Isaiah authorship. For instance Isaiah uses an earlier spelling<sup>2</sup> for the name David (דָּוִד) throughout the book (7:2, 13; 9:7; 16:5; 22:9, 22; 29:1; 37:35; 38:5; 55:3). In books written after the exile David's name is spelled with the longer Hebrew spelling (דָּוִדָּ) in keeping with later authorship (Ezra 3:10; 8:2, 20 and Neh. 3:15, 16; 12:24, 36, 37, 45, 46). Isaiah's use of the shorter spelling throughout his book indicates not only an early manuscript dating well before the exile but also unity. More internal evidence has also been forward.<sup>3</sup> The book clearly indicates that Isaiah prophesied after Uzziah's death and during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). Therefore, this author holds to a single author written around 740-690 B.C. by a prophet of Israel named Isaiah.

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<sup>1</sup> "This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: "My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land and build my temple." This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighbourhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices." Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.1.1.2

<sup>2</sup> Sometime around the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the Hebrews began using some of their consonants as vowels (called "matres lectiones"). Bruce K. and O'Conner Waltke, M., *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> "The internal evidence of unity divides itself under five heads: 1. Identity in respect of the greatness, and the quality, of the genius exhibited by the writer. 2. Similarity in the language and constructions. 3. Similarity in the thoughts, images, and other rhetorical ornaments. 4. Similarity in little characteristic expressions. 5. Correspondences, partly in the way of repetition, partly in that of completion, in the later chapters, of thoughts left incomplete in the earlier." H. D. M. Spence-Jones, "The Pulpit Commentary Isaiah Vol. I," (Bellington: Logos Research Systems, 2004).

## **The Recipients**

Isaiah's message had application to the people of Jerusalem, Judah (1:1) and Israel (8-9) as well as the surrounding nations (13-23). However, Isaiah specifically addressed Judah. While the nation was enjoying a sense of prosperity, Isaiah addressed their calloused attitude toward the Lord and warned them of coming Judgment.

## **The Purpose**

The Holiness of God is a major theme of Isaiah as supported by Isaiah's call (6) and his lengthy pronouncement of judgments upon Israel (1:1-12:6) as well as the surrounding nations (13:1-23:18). The book is also replete with God's mercy and grace as demonstrated in the last section of the book (40-66). It may be concluded then that Isaiah wrote as a classic prophet calling the people to repentance from ungodly sins by noting God's sure judgment while at the same time highlighting God's grace and mercy.

## **The Message**

The first section (1-6) serves as an introduction to the lengthy book. Through this section Isaiah describes Israel's condition (1-5) as well as his personal calling (6). Isaiah indicated that God did not take any pleasure in their heartless worship (1:1-4:6) and as a result their sin would be judged (5:1-30). Isaiah did not see himself as one who was without sin but included himself among those who needed the Lord's cleansing (6:1-13).

In the second section (7-39) Isaiah qualifies the nation's crisis as one of faith. Part of nation's crisis lay with its leadership. Isaiah charged King Ahaz to trust Israel's Covenant God in the face of the Assyrian army (7-12). After addressing Israel's King the prophet announced judgment upon the surrounding nations (13-35). His extensive statements to the gentile nations demonstrated God's sovereign power and thus promoted faith and repentance from those who would listen. Isaiah again addressed Israel's crisis of faith through the ministry of Hezekiah. In the face of judgment (36:1-22), Hezekiah turned to the Lord in prayer for deliverance. As a result of his humility, God suspended his Judgment (37) providing even an extended life for Hezekiah (38). However, Hezekiah quickly turned from the Lord demonstrating little or no concern for the nation (39). Isaiah places the story of Hezekiah in the middle of his book providing a stark reminder to his reader of the Lord's graciousness and the Hebrew habit of ingratitude and half-hearted worship.

In the third section the prophet addressed Israel's calling (40-55). The prophet noted that God's servant would provide grace to Israel (40-48) as well as atonement (49-55). Isaiah indicated that God's deliverance would come through His Servant who would be rejected (49:1-50:11) and suffer (53:1-12).

In the last section (56-66) the prophet encouraged the faithful concerning their expectant restoration. The prophet indicated that Israel did not have the human ability to bring about the restoration. Restoration would take place as a divine initiative (56-59). He future indicated that the nation could expect a glorious future (60-62) under the divine empowerment (63-66). In the last section the prophet focused on God's promised work of restoration (40:1-66:24).

## **The Theme**

God's Salvation is by the grace and power of God through His Redeemer

# Outline of Isaiah

## I. Introduction (1-6)

### A. The Nation's Condition 1-5

1. Their Worship Judged 1:1-2:4
2. Their Walk Judged 2:5-4:6
  - a. Their Lofty Looks 2:5-22
  - b. On the Mighty 3:1-4:6
3. Their Work Judged 5:1-30

### B. The Prophet's Call 6

## II. The Nation's Crisis of Faith (7-39)

### A. Isaiah Called on Judah's Leadership to Trust God and not Assyria 7-12

1. Isaiah Challenged the King Ahaz to Faith 7:1-25
2. Isaiah noted Israel's fall at the hand of Assyria 8:1-9:21
3. Isaiah warned Judah of coming Judgment 10:1-12:6

### B. Isaiah Proclaimed Judgment on Surrounding Nations reminding Israel of God's Sovereignty to Establish Righteousness 13-35

1. God has Power to Judge Surrounding Nations 13-23
  - a. *The Burden of Babylon 13:1-14:24*
  - b. *The Burden of Assyria 14:25-27*
  - c. *The Burden of Philistia 14:28-32*
  - d. *The Burden of Moab 15:1-16:14*
  - e. *The Burden of Damascus 17:1-14*
  - f. *The Burden of Cush 18:1-7*
  - g. *The Burden of Egypt 19-20:6*
  - h. *The Burden of the Desert of the Sea 21:1-10*
  - i. *The Burden of Edom 21:11-12*
  - j. *The Burden of Arabia 21:13-17*
  - k. *The Burden of the Valley of Vision 22:1-25*
  - l. *The Burden of Tyre 23:1-18*
2. God has Power to Establish a Righteous Kingdom 24-35
  - a. *Judgment Shall Come with Deliverance 24:1-27:13*
  - b. *Judgment Shall Come with Woe 28:1-33:24*
  - c. *Judgment Shall Come Upon All 34:1-17*
  - d. *Judgment Shall Come with Restoration 35:1-10*

### C. Israel's Leader Demonstrates Lack of Righteous Faith 36:1-39:8

1. Hezekiah Faces Judgment 36:1-22
2. Hezekiah Prays for and Receives Deliverance 37:1-38:22
3. Hezekiah Demonstrates Ungrateful Attitude 39:1-8

### **III. The Nation's Calling 40-55**

- A. God's Servant will Provide Grace 40-48**
- B. God's Servant will Provide Atonement 49-55**
  - 1. The Servant Rejected 49:1-50:11
  - 2. The Servant will Redeem a Remnant 51:1-52:15
  - 3. The Servant's Suffering 53
  - 4. The Servant's Salvation 54-55

### **IV. The Nation's Restoration 56-66**

- A. The Nation doesn't have the ability to accomplish Restoration 56-59**
- B. The Nation will experience Future Glory 60-62**
- C. The Nation will experience Divine Ability 63-66**

## Questions Concerning Isaiah

1. Describe the setting concerning Isaiah.
2. Describe the debate concerning authorship of Isaiah.
3. What is the theme of Isaiah?
4. What are the different interpretations concerning Isaiah 7:14?
5. Discuss how Hezekiah in 36-39 adds to the overall thrust of Isaiah.
6. What are the different interpretations of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53?
7. Describe elements of the Judgment announced on Tyre in 23:1-18.
8. Describe the significance of the prophecy concerning Cyrus in chapter 45.
9. Describe the significance of the “root” in 11:1.
10. Describe Isaiah 9:2 and its usage in the New Testament.

## Bibliography

Spence-Jones, H. D. M. *The Pulpit Commentary Isaiah Vol. I*. Bellington: Logos Research Systems, 2004.

Waltke, Bruce K. and O'Conner, M. . *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990.