

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14Q_Prophecy in the Prophets_Isaiah_Introduction)

Eschatological Passages in Isaiah

Review of the Chronology of the Prophets

Our study to date of the prophets of the Old Testament in this series brings us to the well-known prophet Isaiah. Of the prophets we've studied to date, Isaiah provides more insight than any others into significant details of the Messianic kingdom. Hosea and Micah are most often considered contemporaries of Isaiah since their ministries included Judah also. With Isaiah, we see the transition of God's prophets from the 8th to the 7th century as well as a shift in focus from warnings to the Northern Kingdom to warnings and ministry to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The enemies of Judah become the focus of the prophet's attention approximately a century or more before their ascendance to power. The rise and dominance of Assyria over Israel should have served as an object lesson to Judah.

Baseline Ryrie Chronology		Revised Chronology (Prophecy Series to Date)	
9 th to 8 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Obadiah ✓ Joel ✓ Jonah ✓ Amos ✓ Hosea 	8 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Jonah (mid 8th – Nineveh, Assyria) ✓ Amos (mid 8th – Israel) ✓ Hosea (mid 8th – Israel & Judah) ✓ Micah (mid 8th – Israel & Judah)
8 th to 7 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Isaiah ✓ Micah Nahum Zephaniah 	8 th to 7 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Isaiah (Judah)
7 th to 6 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremiah Habakkuk 	Late 7 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joel (Judah) Nahum (between 663-612 B.C.) Zephaniah (sometime after 622 B.C.)
6 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezekiel Daniel Haggai Zechariah 	7 th to 6 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremiah (from 627-582 B.C.) ✓ Obadiah (Edom) Habakkuk (between 606-604 B.C.)
5 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezra * Malachi Nehemiah * 	6 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezekiel (593-571 B.C.) Daniel (586-516 B.C.) Haggai (ca 520 B.C.) Zechariah (520-519 B.C.)
		5 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezra (ca 450 B.C.) Malachi (450-430 B.C.) Nehemiah (ca 430 B.C.)

* These are historical versus prophetic books for the most part.

✓ Represents prophets we've studied to date in this series.

Author

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is the author of this book (1:1). Some have questioned whether Isaiah wrote the entirety of the book or not. They divide the book into two or three major sections. Those who divide the book into two sections attribute chapters 1-39 to Isaiah and chapters 40-66 to a Deutero-Isaiah. Those who divide the book into three sections attribute

chapters 1-39 to Isaiah; chapters 40-55 to Deutero-Isaiah; and chapters 56-66 to Trito-Isaiah). In either case, the authorship of the second and third divisions of the book are attributed to a period after the return from Babylonian exile.

Liberal scholars have difficulty reconciling the references to Cyrus the Persian (559-530 B.C.) in chapter 44:28-45:1 with the ministry of Isaiah the prophet since Isaiah lived and ministered approximately a century before Cyrus. Another factor influencing the division of the book and its authorship is the different themes that exist in each of the sections.

The subject of the authorship of Isaiah and all of the issues surrounding it have consumed no doubt thousands of hours of debate, research and writing on both sides of the issue. We will not explore this issue in depth here, but we will review a summary of the support for single authorship of the book. The evidence falls into two major categories – external and internal. None of the single points in and of themselves seal the case, but when all of the evidence is viewed as a whole, a strong circumstantial case can be made for a single author.¹

External Evidence

- ✓ The Dead Sea Scrolls include a complete copy of the book of Isaiah, thus pointing to its acceptance as one book by the Qumran community rather than two or three separate books.
- ✓ The Septuagint, the 2nd Century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, seems to support the single author view of the book.
- ✓ The view that the book was a compilation of the work of more than one writer did not emerge until the rise of liberalism in the 1800's.
- ✓ The New Testament writers assumed that the book was authored by a single prophet:
 - All of the major sections of the book of Isaiah are quoted under the same title – Isaiah.
 - John 12:38 attributes Isaiah 53:1 to Isaiah
 - John 12:39-40 attributes Isaiah 6:10 to Isaiah
 - Several portions of Isaiah 40-66 are attributed to Isaiah by New Testament writers, e.g.
 - Isa. 40:3 cf. Matthew 3:3
 - Isa. 40:3-5 cf. Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; Jn 1:23
 - Isa. 42:1-4 cf. Matt. 12:17-21
 - Isa. 53:1 cf. Rom. 10:16
 - Isa. 53:4 cf. Matt. 8:17
 - Isa. 53: 7-8 cf. Acts 8:32-33
 - Isa. 65:1 cf. Rom. 10:20.
 - Jesus assumed that Isaiah was the author of the entire book
- ✓ Jesus Himself assumed that Isaiah was the author of the whole book. Jesus was given the “scroll of the Prophet Isaiah” (Luke 4:17-19) which He unrolled and from which he read Isaiah 61:1-2.

Internal Evidence

- ✓ Some of the same terms occur throughout the whole book. For example, “the Holy One of Israel” a title for God, occurs 12 times in chapters 1-39 and 14 times in chapters 40-66. This title is used only 6 times elsewhere in the entire Old Testament (2 Kings 19:22; Pss. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer. 50:29; 51:5).
- ✓ The “highway” motif occurs in several parts of the book (Isa. 11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 40:3; 62:10).

¹ I found the following sources helpful for this list of external and internal evidence for the single authorship view of the book – John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 1030-31.

- ✓ The “remnant” theme occurs in 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:4, 31; 37:32 and also in 46:3.
- ✓ The establishment of justice is a theme in the first division of the book (9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 28:6; 32:16; 33:5) and in the second division (42:1, 3-4; 51:5).
- ✓ And “peace” is mentioned 11 times in chapters 1-39 and 15 times in chapters 40-66.
- ✓ “Joy” occurs 13 times in chapters 1-39 and 19 times in chapters 40-66.
- ✓ Also the Hebrew word for “thornbush” occurs in the Old Testament only in Isaiah 7:19 and 55:13 (“thornbushes” in 33:12 translates a different Heb. word).
- ✓ The theological unity of the book is a strong argument for a single author. Chapters 40-55 emphasize the fact that God would deliver His people from captivity in Babylon. Through Isaiah God predicted that Cyrus would appear on the scene (44:28-45:1) and deliver Judah from captivity. In chapters 40-55 (esp. 43:5-6, 16, 19) the theological point is made that God was telling His people about the return from the Exile beforehand so that they would believe in Him when that event came to pass. In this way He differed greatly from the surrounding nations’ gods. As the sovereign God He can foretell events; this ability proves His uniqueness in contrast with false gods. If those chapters were written *after* the time of Cyrus this means that the God of Israel did not foretell that event and is no different from the gods of the surrounding nations. Therefore to say that chapters 40-55 were written after Cyrus’ time strips those chapters of theological validity and makes them almost meaningless.

Purpose

Isaiah was aware that Judah was headed for the same fate that had befallen Israel, the Northern Kingdom, because of her infidelity to the Mosaic Covenant. Isaiah knew that the Mosaic Covenant also stipulated provisions for judgment should God’s covenant people violate the provisions of the Covenant (e.g. Lev 26:14-39 and Deut 28:49-50, 64-67). Those judgmental provisions included and culminated in exile from the Land.

Isaiah also knew that God’s unilateral covenant with Abraham included blessings of a Messiah, spiritual blessings and possession of the Land of Promise. Therefore, should Judah be disciplined under the judgmental provisions of the Mosaic Law and exiled from the Land, Isaiah knew she would eventually be restored to the Land of Promise due to God’s integrity – the foundation of the unilateral, Abrahamic Covenant. This is the reason that the theme of comfort is so prevalent in Isaiah 40-66 (40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2; 66:13) when the word “comfort” is only used once in chapters 1-39 (12:1).²

Therefore, Isaiah’s purpose is to warn his generation and the future generation of Judah that they were headed for judgment. At the same time Isaiah desired to provide hope for the exile generation. Isaiah was calling the first group to repentance, holiness and obedience. At the same time, Isaiah was providing comfort to the exile generation with assurances that God would restore the nation to their Land and establish His kingdom of peace and prosperity.

Themes

There are several major themes in the book of Isaiah. In chapters 1-39, judgment seems to be the emphasis, whereas in chapters 40-66 salvation and comfort are emphasized. Thus, Isaiah tends to follow the pattern set in the Law (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:49-67) that judgment for violations of the Law will precede any covenantal blessings. Chapters 40-66 emphasize more than personal, spiritual salvation (i.e. redemption from sin); these chapters also emphasize the deliverance of the whole of creation during the period of Messianic blessing.

Another theme that emerges in Isaiah is God’s name. Isaiah has a tremendous relationship with and view of God. Isaiah centered His theology on God’s work on behalf of His

² Martin, “Isaiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, 1031-32.

covenant people – His sovereign ability to insure that the integrity of His covenant relationship with His chosen people as well as the integrity of His own essence remained intact. This fact is revealed in the names he uses for God as well as the pattern of usage of God's various names.³

- ✓ Yahweh is the covenant name for God. Isaiah used this name for God more than 300 times. It was the most prominent name for God that Isaiah used.
- ✓ Elohim is used six times in chapter 40 (vv. 1, 3, 8-9, 27-28) which introduces the section on "comfort" (i.e. hope for Messianic, eschatological blessings) for God's covenant people. In the context, the term Elohim is a reference to God as sovereign in the affairs of men, over creation and above false gods.⁴ Thus, God's ability to achieve His divine objectives in regard to His chosen nation and people is emphasized as certain even in the choice of names for God that Isaiah chooses.
- ✓ The Hebrew compound name Yahweh Ts^{ai} va-ot which can be translated "the Lord of hosts" is the most common compound name for God in the book of Isaiah. It appears 46 times in chapters 1-39 and 6 times in the remainder of the book. This compound title links the covenant name of God (Yahweh) with His sovereignty over all heavenly powers.
- ✓ Other names for God used by Isaiah include:
 - The Lord, the Lord Almighty – 10 times
 - The God of Israel – 12 times
 - The Holy One of Israel – 25 times
 - Redeemer – 13 times (all in chapters 41-63 and only one time in remainder of the entire OT)

Our Approach to Isaiah

Obviously, an extended period of time could be devoted to the study of the book of Isaiah alone. The book is rich in depth and width of meaning and application. It is the first book in the Hebrew OT because it is the most comprehensive in content. Any extended study of this wonderful book at this time would be outside the scope and focus of our prophecy series. Therefore, we will focus on a few prophetic passages from this wonderful book. This will be our approach for the remainder of the OT prophets we study in this series. Then we'll step back and synthesize what the OT prophets foretold compared with what is disclosed in the NT regarding eschatology.

Some of the well-known and loved passages from Isaiah include 1:18; 7:14; 9:6-7; 26:8; 40:3, 31; 53. First, let's just read these together and marvel at God the Holy Spirit's ministry through the prophet Isaiah. As we read these passages, picture Isaiah delivering messages or sermons to the people of Judah about 100 years before the Babylonian captivity.

A few years prior, Israel had been conquered and deported by the Assyrians. Judah was rife with many of the same spiritual problems as Israel before her judgment at the hands of Assyria. The leaders had negotiated truces and agreements with dubious allies instead of

³ For a good summary of the various names for God used by Isaiah, see Martin, "Isaiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, 1032. My list is an extraction from Martin's narrative.

⁴ Merrill F. Unger summarizes some principles relating to the distinction between the use of "Jehovah" [*Yahweh*] and "Elohim" in the Old Testament as follows – "1. Jehovah [*Yahweh*] represents God in His special relation to the chosen people, as revealing Himself to them, their guardian and object of their worship; Elohim represents God in His relation to the world at large, as Creator, providential ruler in the affairs of men, and controlling the operations of nature. 2. Elohim is used when Gentiles speak or are spoken to or spoken about, unless there is a specific reference to Jehovah [*Yahweh*], the God of the chosen people. 3. Elohim is used when God is contrasted with men or things, or when the sense requires a common rather than a proper noun." Italics are mine. See Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, 1961, 1966, 1985, 1988), 360.

trusting in the strength of the Lord as the true prophets of Yahweh had urged. Instead, Judah was heavily influenced by false prophets who cried “peace, peace” when there was no peace (Jer 6:14; 8:11). The “sheep” of Judah were being led astray spiritually by false “shepherds.” Their spiritual reversionism permeated all areas of society and life. Cynicism toward God’s covenants, promises and prophets abounded. Yet, a few men and women in Judah properly interpreted their spiritual situation and still hoped for the glorious future kingdom led by God’s Messiah Deliverer. They still clung to that thread of hope and comfort that weaved its way through all the written revelation they had that dated back to Moses and which had been amplified with much oral tradition in the centuries since. In the midst of this morass of spiritual confusion and unfaithfulness arose Isaiah with a clear message of warning and hope.

In each and every crisis in Israel and Judah’s history (i.e. the Assyrian invasions, the attacks against Jerusalem, the false alliances, etc.), Isaiah did not become cynical or depressed. He maintained his focus and trust in the God he had come to know very personally. The nation’s dependence upon human solutions was empty and even idolatrous in that it rejected the Lord’s promises and provisions. Isaiah relied only upon the Lord for help and strength (Isa 30:1-5). He appealed to the Lord on Judah’s behalf (59:9-15; 62:6, 7; 64:1, 2). The same man who exposed the lies, sins and unfaithfulness of the nation interceded for them. Isaiah was not just a messenger of God; Isaiah was an intercessor for God’s people.

Principle: A measure of spiritual growth – like Isaiah, the more one progresses in the knowledge of Truth and God’s purpose in human history, the more compassion one should have toward others.

Application: Would you say that you have become increasingly cynical of people in our society as you have grown in the knowledge of Truth or have you grown more compassionate demonstrated by a willingness to intercede in prayer on behalf of a spiritually blind nation and world?

In our next lesson, we will explore select, prophetic passages from Isaiah.