

Book of Isaiah



Introduction

Theme: Prophecy

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The Book of Isaiah is one of the most important books of the Old Testament. Little is known of the personal life of the prophet. He is considered to be one of the greatest of them all. His striking literary gifts suggest upper-class birth and education.¹

The messenger of the message of salvation is the prophet Isaiah, whose name means “salvation of Yahweh,” or “Yah saves.” He was the son of Amoz; he may also have been related to the royal family, perhaps King Manasseh, by whom he was believed to have been sawn asunder (Heb. 11:37). He prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and also may have lived past Hezekiah into the reign of Manasseh. Assuming that he was a young man at the death of Uzziah in 742 B.C. when his official ministry began, he might have been 70 or 80 at the time of his death (ca. 680 B.C.). Therefore, the prophet would have ministered for at least 60 years in an effort to bring the nation back to God.²

Isaiah lived in a time of tension. In many respects it was a time of crisis in the history of the world. World-shaking events were transpiring. Catastrophic and cataclysmic judgments were taking place. There was upheaval in the social order.

Jews and Christians consider the Book of Isaiah a part of their Biblical canon; he is the first listed (although not the earliest) of the *Nevi'im Aharonim*, the latter prophets. Muslims consider Isaiah a prophet mentioned in Muslim exegesis of canonical scriptures.

Message to Jerusalem and Us:

Scholars have long recognized the grammatical nuances of Isaiah 40:1-5. In verse 1, a speaker commands someone to comfort “my people” (עַמִּי), the people of Jerusalem, which suggests the speaker is Yahweh. However, the identity of the recipient(s) of the command is unknown. Frank Cross observes an “unusual series of active imperatives, plural.” The plural imperatives referred to by Cross include two instances of נַחֲמוּ and one instance of דַּבְּרוּ. Furthermore, verse 1 and 3 supply additional plurals, אֲלֹהֵיכֶם and לְאֵלֹהֵינוּ, which both occur with plural pronominal suffixes. The recipients of the commands have perplexed translators and scholars alike. The LXX provides the vocative plural masculine ἱερεῖς (O priests), while the Targums suggest the subjects are prophets. Geoffrey Grogan appears to agree with the Targums, while Gary Smith suggests it is “not profitable to speculate.” Regardless, Michael Heiser contends the plural suffixes and imperatives provide evidence that the commands are “issued to an unseen audience, and require actions that cannot be fulfilled by earthly addressees.” Heiser presents additional evidence of divine council activity by noting the speaker changes in verse 3, suggesting an individual member of the assembly cries out in response to Yahweh and issues plural imperatives, consistent with verses 1 and 2, to a divine audience. Further evidence for Heiser’s assertion exists in the relationship of Isaiah 40:1-11 and Isaiah 6. Isaiah of Jerusalem sees Yahweh with heavenly beings (שָׁרְפִיִּים) standing with Him and praising the “Lord of hosts,” which suggests the presence of a divine council (Isa. 6:1-3 [ESV]). Additionally, Yahweh asks a question in Isaiah 6 to a plural audience, similar to the plurality in Isaiah 40:1-5, that also provides evidence of a divine council, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8;

¹Richards, L. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion*. Includes index. (Is 1:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

² Chuck Missler, Konia House Ministries, notes on Isaiah

emphasis added). Cross notes that the parallel between Isaiah 6:1-8 and Isaiah 40:1-11 “is remarkable.” The content of Isaiah 6 and its overlap with Isaiah 40 clearly supports the possibility of a divine council scene later in Isaiah. Accordingly, based on the plural imperatives and suffixes, the alternating speakers, and the conceptual relationship to Isaiah 6, the evidence supports a divine council assembling in Isaiah 40:1-5.³

Personal Background

Isaiah was the son of Amoz (not Amos: 1st and last letters are different in the Hebrew)

Brother of Uzziah’s father?

Family of rank: Access to the King (7:3); intimacy with high priest (8:2).

Tradition: cousin of King Uzziah.

Jerusalem was his home; served as court preacher.

Married, two sons

1. *Shear-jashub* = “a remnant shall return”; a symbolical name for the son of Isaiah the prophet.
2. *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* “swift is booty, speedy is prey”; a symbolic name given by Isaiah by the Lord’s direction to Isaiah’s son; a prophetic indication that Damascus and Samaria were soon to be plundered by the king of Assyria.

Literary style: versatility of expression, and brilliance of imagery; has no rival; regarded as the climax of Hebrew literary art.

- Epigrams and metaphors: 1:13; 5:18, 22; 8:8; 10:22; 28:17, 20; 30:28, 30.
- Interrogation and dialogue: 6:8; 10:8, 9.
- Antithesis and alliteration: 1:18; 3:24; 17:10, 12
- Hyperbole and parable: 2:7; 5:1-7; 28:23-29
- Encryption: (Albam) 7:1, 46

Vocabulary (number of different words used):

- Ezekiel 1535
- Jeremiah 1653
- Psalmists 2170
- Isaiah 2186

[Cf Milton, Dante, Shakespeare...largest English vocabularies on record.]

Poetical, rhythmic style: 12:1-6; 25:1-5; 26:1-12; 38:10-20; 2:1-4; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 60-62; 66:5-24.

Elegiac rhythm: 37:22-29,

King Senracherib Taunt: 14:4-23. [cf. Bullinger]

³ Lives Transforming, <http://www.livestransforming.com/exegesis-isaiah-401-11>

There are some 66 direct quotations from Isaiah in the New Testament. Some people have found 85 quotations and allusions to Isaiah in the New Testament. 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament refer to Isaiah; 12 books of the New Testament have direct quotations.

ISAIAH is woven into the New Testament as a brightly colored thread woven into a beautiful pattern.

ISAIAH is discernible and conspicuous in the New Testament.

ISAIAH is chiseled into the rock of the New Testament with the power tool of the Holy Spirit.

ISAIAH is often used to enforce and enlarge upon those passages that speak of Christ.⁴

Texts:

Septuagint (used in Christ's day) 285 B.C.; Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran, 1947, Cave 1. First scroll, complete Hebrew Text, 17 sheets, 10.3 in x 24 ft, 2nd century? Second scroll, 1/3.)

History of the Critical "Problem"

1775 Doderlein, 2 authors

1779 Koppe, questioned chapter 50 Rosenmueller, 13, 14?

1794 Eichhorn, questioned chapters 40-66

1821 Gesenius, questioned chapters 40-66

1886 Franz Delitsch yields his defense

1888 Driver and Smith in Britain...

See John 12:37-40 vs 39 that same Isaiah said again

Internal and external evidence points to the unity of authorship. The title for God, "Holy One of Israel," which reflects the deep impression that Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 made on him, occurs 12 times in chapters 1—39 and 14 times in chapters 40—66, but only seven times elsewhere in the entire Old Testament. Other key phrases, passages, words, themes, and motifs likewise appear in both parts of the book. Jewish tradition uniformly attributed the entire book to Isaiah, as did Christian tradition until the eighteenth century. The Isaiah Dead Sea Scroll, the oldest copy of Isaiah that we have, dating from the second century B.C., has chapter 40 beginning in the same column in which chapter 39 ends. All the major commentaries and introductions deal with the unity problem

⁴Dr. J. Vernon McGee, http://www.ttb.org/docs/default-source/notes-outlines/no16_isaiah.pdf?sfvrsn=2

“Higher Criticism” leads to the Deutero-Isaiah 1-39 vs 40-66; (Trito-Isaiah also: 40-55; 56-66..)

- 1) Need to deny prophecy (vs. Intent of the text: 8:16; 30:8; 42:23. “Yea, hath God said..” Gen 3:1)
- 2) Scope of the book beyond the capacity of the critics: conversion of the heathen; universal peace; universal judgement.
- 3) Evidence of Inspiration
 - a) Unity of ideas:
 - “Holy one of Israel” (25X: 12X in 1-39; 13X in 40-66)
 - “Highway,” 7X
 - “Remnant,” 12X
 - “Zion,” 18X (10X in “1”; 8X in “2”)
 - “Pangs of a woman in travail,” 6X (3X in “1”; 3X in “2”)
 - b) Literary style
 - c) Historical references
 - d) Predictive elements: Cyrus, et al. (Ch. 44, 45..)
 - e) John 12 (!)
 - f) Luke 4 (vs. 61:1,2)

Design of the Book

Division I: Chapters 1 - 35

1-6 Judah [6: King on the Throne]

7-12 Israel

13-23 Nations: Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Syria, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Tyre

24-27 World: “Day of YHWH” (Called, the “Little Apocalypse”)

28-33 Six “Woes” upon Jerusalem

34-35 Tribulation & Millennium

Division II (Parenthetical: History)

(Cf. 2 Kings 18:13-20:19 [written by Isaiah?]; 2 Chronicles 32)

36 Hezekiah’s Trouble: Assyrian invasion threat

37 Hezekiah’s Prayer

38 Hezekiah’s Illness

39 Hezekiah’s Folly

Division III

40-48 The Purpose of Peace

48:22 “There is no peace, saith YHWH, to the Wicked.”

49-57 The Prince of Peace

Ch 53 (Christ) right in the middle. The “Holy of Holies” of OT

58-66 The Program of Peace

57:21 “There is no peace, saith YHWH, to the Wicked.”

Preview: Notable Elements

6 Vision of the Throne of God (Cf. Ezek 10, Rev 4)
7 Virgin Birth (also, Albam encryption) First mention Gen 3:15
9 Messianic revelation
14 Lucifer's Rebellion
19 Great Pyramid allusion?
40 John the Baptist announced
53 Suffering and death of the Messiah
61 Quoted by Christ as His mandate
65, 66 Millennium and beyond

Chronology

Ussiah, 791-740 (2 Kgs 15:1-5; 2 Chr 26:1-23)
Jotham, 750-736 (2 Kgs 15:32-38; 2 Chr 27:1-9)
Ahaz (-) 736-716 (2 Kgs 16:1-20; 2 Chr 28:1-27)
Hezekiah, 716-687 (2 Kgs 18:1-20:21)
Manasseh (-) 686-642 (2 Kgs 21:1-18; 2 Chr 33:1-20)

Messianic Prophecies

(Only exceeded by the Psalms!)

Deity, eternity, preexistence, creatorship, omnipotence, omnipresence: 40:12-18; 51;13

Incarnation: 9:6; 7:14

Youth in Nazareth: 7:15; 9:1-2; 11:1; 53:2

Anointed as Servant of the Lord: 11:2

Chosen; delighted in: 42:1

Mild manner: 42:2

Ministering kindness: 42:3; (Matthew 12:18-20)

Obedience: 50:5

Message: 61:1,2

Miracles: 35:5-6

Sufferings: 50:6; 52:14

Gathering to exultation: 52:13-15

Rejection by Israel: 53:1-3

Shame, struck, bruised: 53:4-6

Vicarious death: 53:8

Burial: 53:9

Resurrection: 53:10

Ascension: 52:13

Spiritual progeny: 53:10

High Priestly ministry: 53:12

Future glory: 59:20; 63:1-6; 66:15-19

(Not mentioned as a servant after Chapter 53)

In the first verse he tells us the historical time of his prophecies, beginning when Uzziah was king of Judah, which puts it about 760 BC. And he lived through the succeeding reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and into Hezekiah's reign.

Greatest of the writing prophets, ministered during the reign of four kings, a period which included the invasion of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria. [Also, the change of all calendars in 701 B.C., possibly due to an alteration of the orbit of the Earth, according to some views.] Most comprehensive of all prophets. Span of themes include the creation of the universe (42:5) to the creation of a new heavens and new earth (65:17; 66:22). No other prophet matches his majestic eloquence on the glory of God. All the nations of the world are included in his predictions. No other prophet is more focused on the redemptive work of the Messiah, or more clearly aware of grace.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ISAIAH AND THE WHOLE BIBLE²⁸	
Isaiah	The Bible
66 chapters	66 books
Two sections: chapters 1—39 and 40—66	Two Testaments: 39 OT books and 27 NT books
Emphasis in chapters 1—39 on God's righteousness, holiness, and justice	Emphasis in the 39 OT books on God's righteousness, holiness, and justice
Emphasis in chapters 40—66 on God's glory, compassion, and grace	Emphasis in the 27 NT books on God's glory, compassion, and grace
Chapters 1—39 emphasize Israel's need for restoration.	The OT emphasizes humanity's need for salvation.
Chapters 40—66 predict God's future provision of salvation in the Servant.	The NT describes God's provision of salvation in the Messiah.
Isaiah begins with a description of Israel's rebellion and ends with predictions of restoration.	The Bible begins with a description of humanity's rebellion and ends with a depiction of salvation in Jesus Christ.
Message: A holy God will gain glory by judging sin and restoring His people.	Message: A holy God will gain glory by judging sin and saving those who call on the name of His Son Jesus.