

Isaiah: *Yahweh is Salvation*

"The Gospel in the Old Testament."

Isaiah is the most quoted Old Testament prophet in the New Testament, and usually regarded as the greatest of the writing prophets. It is filled with unparalleled literary beauty and a variety of rich symbols.

"The last forty years of the eighth century B.C. produced great men, but the greatest of these was the prophet Isaiah" (Kyle M. Yates, *Preaching from the Prophets*, p. 83).

George L. Robinson says, ". . . of all Israel' celebrated prophets, Isaiah is the king. The writing, which bears his name, is among the profoundest in all literature. . . Isaiah is the (St.) Paul of the Old Testament" (*ISBE*, "Isaiah"). Herbert Wolf notes, "Isaiah is to the Old Testament as the Book of Romans is to the New Testament, a book filled with rich theological truth."

"He was unquestionably the most imposing figure of his age" (Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 22).

"The book of Isaiah is generally acknowledged to be the greatest of the prophetic books of the Old Testament" (Elmer A. Leslie, *Isaiah*, p.15).

"Isaiah seems to me not to have composed a prophecy, but a gospel," wrote Jerome.

AUTHOR: Isaiah son of Amoz of Jerusalem wrote all 66 chapters (1:1). It would be most unusual that the Jewish people would not know who wrote the magnificent prophecy in chapters 40-66.

REASONS FOR REJECTING *Deutero-Isaiah*:

1. If Isaiah was a true prophet of God and inspired by Him, it was possible for him to predict coming events, and even call the name before he was born. They deny the power of God to foretell the future through His messenger.
2. The claim of a difference in style of Isaiah in the two parts of the prophecy does not prove that there were two authors, or three or four. Isaiah was a cultured man of great ability and he ministered 40-60 years. The style of condemnation would be different from comfort and promise.
3. Passages from the second section of Isaiah are attributed to Isaiah by John the Baptist, Matthew and Paul. We do not think these men to have been mistaken. Inspired of the Holy Spirit, they should know more about the author than the critics who lived 2,500 years later.
4. Both Jewish and Christian tradition supports the view that Isaiah wrote the entire prophecy.
5. Isaiah Scroll, discovered in 1947, copied 2,000 years ago, gives no break between chapters 39-40.
6. Words and phrases common to both parts of the prophecy indicate one author. Cf. "the Holy One of Israel," also 40:5 with 1:20; 43:13 with 14:27; 65:12 with 11:9 etc. (R. B. Jones, *Survey of the Old and New Testaments*, pp. 186-87).
7. Nowhere in the Book of Isaiah, or in the Bible, is there mention or even a hint of two authors.
8. The Book of Isaiah has always been one book.
9. Isaiah is characterized by unity of thought in the most beautiful language.
10. It demonstrates the closest continuity in the teaching from beginning to end.

11. Climatic development builds steadily upon messianic revelation unlike any other book.
12. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 53:1 in John 12:37-41. He was speaking of the prophet Isaiah and was claiming that these were the words Isaiah wrote.
13. Testimony of the New Testament attributes the book to one Isaiah of Jerusalem. Matthew 13:14; 15:7; Mark 7:6; John 12:38, 39, 41; Acts 20:25; Romans 9:27, 29.

DATE: Most of the chapters were probably written by c. 700 B.C., and chapters 40-66 probably later perhaps in Isaiah's "retirement." Time would account for the change in subject matter and style. In these chapters Isaiah writes about events that will take place 150 years later.

THEME: The message of the book is symbolized in the name of Isaiah, "The salvation of Jehovah," or "Jehovah is salvation." He portrays the remnant and its glorious return.

PURPOSE: Dr. J. W. Watts says Isaiah has three main purposes: "(1) maintenance of faith in JHWH's final success in blessing Judah and Jerusalem; (2) revelation of Messiah as JHWH's supreme means of accomplishing all his work; (3) construction of a philosophy of world history with the universal, spiritual kingdom of God as its goal" (*A Survey of O.T. Teaching*, Vol. II, p. 155).

Valeton says of Isaiah: "Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history."

STYLE: Isaiah writes in superbly varied style and vocabulary with brilliant poetic passages in chapter 40, 53, 55 and 60. He uses prose, poetry, dialogue, story, antitheses, song, oratory, homily, interrogatory, alliteration, irony, sarcasm, satire, epigram, metaphor, hyperbole, play on words, etc. The book is logical, homiletical, messianic, philosophical as well as literary. It is the beautiful and meaningful literary masterpiece of all Hebrew writings.

THE MAN ISAIAH

Isaiah means "Yahweh is Salvation," "Salvation of Jehovah," or "Jehovah saves" (1:1).

Isaiah (740-681 B.C. or slightly longer) was born c. 760 B.C., and his ministry covered a period of forty to sixty years. He was born into an influential, upper class family and knew royalty. He influenced the foreign policy of the nation (7:3, 4; 8:2; 30:1-7; 36:1-38:8, 21; 2 Kings 18:3-20:19). The Talmud says that Isaiah was a cousin of Uzziah or a nephew of Amaziah. Historical background for his prophecy is found in II Kings 14-20. He was the son of Amoz, whom Jewish tradition says was the brother of King Amaziah, and a cousin of King Uzziah. He lived in Jerusalem, seems to have had easy access to the king (7:3), and was intimate with the high priest (8:2). Isaiah received his call in the year of Uzziah's death (6), and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and possibly Manasseh. During his ministry Isaiah saw the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.). His wife was a "prophetess" (8:1). Their son's names were prophetic messages. His oldest son is Shear-jashub, meaning, "a remnant shall return" (7:3), and Maher-shalal-hasbaz, meaning, "swift is the booty, speedy is the prey" (8:3). He is a sign of the fast approaching threat of Assyria and the captivity of the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah was the most extraordinary of the Hebrew prophets. As preacher and statesman he has no equal among the prophets. His written prophecy is one of the finest specimens of Hebrew literature. Isaiah was probably a scribe or keeper of the official chronicle of Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:22).

Isaiah was called to be a prophet in the last year of the reign of king Uzziah (6:1). He could never get away from the thrice holiness of God which he saw in the Temple. "Holy One of Israel" occurs 25 times in Isaiah and only six times in the rest of the Old Testament. He probably spent his entire life in Jerusalem. There is no indication that he ever traveled to any other place. He is seen as the "court preacher" or "royal chaplain." Delitzsch calls him "the universal prophet of Israel." He preaches redemption by faith.

ISAIAH'S PERSONALITY:

Benjamin Herring lists eleven characteristics of the king of the prophets. He is worshipful and reverent, a man great in prayer, with an intimate personal touch with God, of unquestioning obedience to Yahweh, courageous and bold, well educated, versatile and brilliant, with a vivid imagination, unbounding in his convictions, consistent logical and clear. In deed he is a world citizen, spiritually and politically (Herring, pp. 105-6).

ISAIAH'S DEATH:

There are many traditions concerning Isaiah's death, however nothing definite is said in the Scriptures. The Jewish Mishna says that the wicked king Manasseh slew him, and a tradition in the second century A. D. says that he took refuge in a hollow tree, and Manasseh had the tree, prophet and all, sawed in two. It is probable, but no means certain, that he is referred to in Hebrews 11:37, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder." Isaiah outlived king Hezekiah and lived to record his life history. "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, behold, they are written in vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel" (2 Chronicles 32:32).

THE TIMES IN WHICH ISAIAH LIVED:

The Northern Kingdom of Israel would go in Assyrian captivity, and there are 150 years left in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Herbert Wolf observes, "Not only did Isaiah predict the Babylonian captivity of 586-39 B.C. (cf. 6:11, 12), but he also foretold that Israel would be released from Babylon (48:20). The Chaldean kingdom led by Nebuchadnezzar would be God's instrument of judgment upon Judah, but they too would suffer defeat. One of Isaiah's most remarkable prophecies was the naming of Cyrus, king of Persia, the ruler who would conquer the Babylonians in 539 B.C., and release Israel from exile (cf. 44:28; 45:1)" (*Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. I, p. 1047-48).

Contemporary kings of Judah

The Southern Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital had a long and prosperous king just before Isaiah received his call to be a prophet. Uzziah (770-740 B.C.) promoted many national and economic measures (II Chron. 26:1-23), conquered the Philistine and Arabians, built fortified cities, received tribute from Ammonites, fortified Jerusalem and Judah. Uzziah promoted husbandry, organized and equipped a great army, became famous abroad, committed sacrilege and became a leper.

Jotham's reign was mostly co-regent with Uzziah during his last years and fortified Judah and Jerusalem and kept the Ammonites in subjection. Jotham and Uzziah were good kings.

Ahaz, a faithless, wicked king (735-727 B.C.) was wholly given over to idolatry. Cf. II Kings 16; II Chron. 28). The Syro-Ephraimite War involved Ahaz in a war with Syria and Ephraim (Northern Kingdom of Israel). Ahaz called upon king Pul (Tiglath-pileser) of Assyria for help. Ahaz introduced Syrian idolatry into Judah after 732 B.C.

Hezekiah reigned as king in Judah (727-698 B.C.). He was the best king. Cf. II Kings 18:1-20:21; II Chron. 29:1-32:33; Isa. 36:1-39:8). Hezekiah introduced great reforms, observed the Passover, restored temple services, destroyed idols, his sickness brought thanksgivings. Sennacherib invaded Judah during his reign, and God delivered His people in 701 B.C. from Assyrians.

After Hezekiah, Manasseh became king of Judah and he was the worst of the kings. He reigned 55 years from 698-642 B. C. It is possible that Isaiah was martyred during his reign.

Contemporary kings of the Northern Kingdom

Tiglath-pileaser had conquered all of northern Syria by 740 B.C. (2 Kings 15:19f). The Northern Kingdom of Israel was characterized by "outward prosperity, accompanied by much inward corruption." Jeroboam II (including regency 793-753 B. C.) was a long, prosperous, idolatrous reign. Zechariah lasted only six months and was assassinated by Shallum c. 752, and he made it only one month. Isaiah will live to see the fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.), and deportation to Assyria. Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea are all bad.

Kings of Assyria:

Tiglath-pileaser III (Pul) (745-727 B.C.)

Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.)

Sargon III (722-705 B.C.)

Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.)

ISAIAH'S CONTEMPORARIES

Amos was bringing his ministry to a close in the Northern Kingdom of Israel as Isaiah began to prophesy in Judah. Hoshea, in the North, had already begun his ministry. A young prophet, Micah, will begin his during Isaiah's time. Zechariah is also a contemporary in the South, and Jonah was probably just before Isaiah's time.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

There was the usual chasm between the rich class and the poor. The rich got richer and the poor got poorer. Abuses, resentment, unrest, class feelings, and profiteering were evident. The gravest problem in Isaiah's day was land grabbing. The city government was corrupt. Bribed judges made life miserable for the poor people. Drunkenness, luxury, idleness, and indifference added sorrow upon sorrow (Yates, p. 84).

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

The religious leaders were too busy drinking corn mesh to listen to the voice of God. It has been said that you can tell how low a nation falls by how low the women of the nation stoop. The women of Jerusalem were coarse, sensual, drunken, thoughtless, given over to wickedness. The people were ignorant of their spiritual need. They falsely assumed: (1) that the Mosaic covenant could not be broken. (2) Israel could fulfill her obligations by observing rituals and sacrifices. (3) The Day of the Lord would be a day of triumph for Israel. (4) God would never allow Jerusalem to be destroyed (Page Kelley, *Judgment and Redemption in Isaiah*, p. 10).

THE MESSIAH IN ISAIAH:

Isaiah contains the largest number of Messianic prophecies.

[The Holy City Isaiah 2:1](#)

[The Branch Isaiah 4:2](#)

[God with Us Isaiah 7:14](#)

[Rock of Salvation & Stone of Stumbling Isaiah 8:14](#)

[The Child with Many Names Isaiah 9:1-6](#)

[A Shoot from the Stem of Jesse Isaiah 11:1-5](#)

[Our Blessed Hope Isaiah 11:6-12:6](#)

[One Liners in Isaiah Isaiah 12-40](#)

[When God Wipes Away the Tears Isaiah 25:8; 26:19](#)

[A Kingdom of Righteousness Isaiah 32:1-20](#)

[The Vindication of God's Righteousness Romans 3:24-26](#)

[The Servant Songs of Isaiah Isaiah 42-53](#)

[The Divine Servant Isaiah 52:13-15](#)

[The Divine Sufferer Isaiah 53:1-3](#)

[The Divine Substitute Isaiah 53:4-6](#)

[The Divine Sacrifice Isaiah 53:7-9](#)

[The Divine Satisfaction Isaiah 53:10-12](#)

[The LORD God Reigns! Isaiah 54-66](#)

Servant of Jehovah in 42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-2; 52:13-53:12 is "the highest peak in the mountain range of Messianic prophecy," says John R. Sampey.

Only the Messiah can achieve these things described in the glorious future Messianic Kingdom (2:2-4; 4:2-6; 12:1-6; 19:18-25; 25:26; 28:16; 33:17-24; 35; 40:1-11; 49:14-26; 52:1-12; 54; 60; 62; 65; 66).

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