

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Isaiah

The Title of Isaiah

The Hebrew name for Isaiah means “Yahweh is salvation.” The Book of Isaiah provides us with rich, theological insights into the person and work of the Messiah. As such, it is one of the most important books in the Old Testament.

An Outline of Isaiah

- I. Volume of Rebuke and Promise - Isaiah 1:1-6:13
 - A. First sermon - rebellion confronted with judgment and grace - Isaiah 1:1-31
 - B. Second sermon - present chastisement for future glory - Isaiah 2:1-4:6
 - C. Third sermon - judgment and exile for the stubborn nation - Isaiah 5:1-30
 - D. Fourth sermon - the prophet cleansed and commissioned by God - Isaiah 6:1-13
- II. Volume of Immanuel - Isaiah 7:1-12:6
 - A. First sermon - rejection of Immanuel - Isaiah 7:1-25
 - B. Second sermon - speedy deliverance foreshadowing the coming Messiah - Isaiah 8:1-9:7
 - C. Third sermon - unchangeable doom for Samaria - Isaiah 9:8-10:4
 - D. Fourth sermon - the fall of Assyria and the glorious empire to come - Isaiah 10:5-12:6
- III. God's Judgment - Burdens Upon the Nations - Isaiah 13:1-23:18
 - A. Babylon - Isaiah 13:1-14:27
 - B. Philistia - Isaiah 14:28-32
 - C. Moab - Isaiah 15:1-16:14
 - D. Damascus and Samaria - Isaiah 17:1-14
 - E. Ethiopia - Isaiah 18:1-7
 - F. Egypt - Isaiah 19:1-20:6
 - G. Babylon - second burden - Isaiah 21:1-10
 - H. Edom - Isaiah 21:11-12
 - I. Arabia - Isaiah 21:13-17
 - J. Jerusalem - Isaiah 22:1-25
 - K. Tyre - Isaiah 23:1-18
- IV. First Volume of General Judgment and Promise - Isaiah 24:1-27:13
 - A. First sermon - universal judgment for universal sin - Isaiah 24:1-23
 - B. Second sermon - praise to the Lord as Deliverer, Victor, and Comforter - Isaiah 25:1-12
 - C. Third sermon - a song of rejoicing in Judah's consolation - Isaiah 26:1-21
 - D. Fourth sermon - punishment for oppressors and preservation for God's people - Isaiah 27:1-13
- V. Volume of Woes Upon the Unbelievers of Israel - Isaiah 28:1-33:24
 - A. First sermon - God's dealings with drunkards and scoffers - Isaiah 28:1-29
 - B. Second sermon - judgment upon blind souls who try to deceive God - Isaiah 29:1-24
 - C. Third sermon - confidence in man versus confidence in God - Isaiah 30:1-33
 - D. Fourth sermon - deliverance through God's gracious intervention - Isaiah 31:1-32:20
 - E. Fifth sermon - punishment of treacherous deceivers and the triumph of Christ - Isaiah 32:1-24
- VI. Second Volume of General Judgment and Promise - Isaiah 34:1-35:10
 - A. First sermon - destruction of the Gentile world power - Isaiah 34:1-17
 - B. Second sermon - the ultimate bliss of God's redeemed - Isaiah 35:1-10
- VII. The Volume of Hezekiah - Isaiah 36:1-39:8

- A. Destruction of Judah averted - Isaiah 36:1-37:38
 - B. Destruction of Judah's King averted - Isaiah 38:1-22
 - C. Judgment upon the king's pride; Babylonian captivity predicted - Isaiah 39:1-8
- VIII. Volume of Comfort
- A. Purpose of Peace - Isaiah 40:1-48:22
 - 1. Majesty of Jehovah - Isaiah 40:1-31
 - 2. Challenge of the sovereign God to worldly-minded believers - Isaiah 41:1-29
 - 3. The Servant of Jehovah - Isaiah 42:1-25
 - 4. Redemption by Grace - Isaiah 43:1-44:5
 - 5. Dead idols or the living God? - Isaiah 44:6-23
 - 6. The sovereign God employing Cyrus as deliverer and the ultimate conversion of converting the heathen - Isaiah 44:24-45:25
 - 7. Lessons to be learned from Babylon's downfall - Isaiah 46:1-47:15
 - 8. Judgment upon faithless, hypocritical Israel - Isaiah 48:1-22
 - B. Prince of Peace - Isaiah 49:1-57:21
 - 1. Messiah to bring restoration to Israel and light to the Gentiles - Isaiah 49:1-26
 - 2. Sinfulness of Israel contrasted with the obedience of the Servant - Isaiah 50:1-11
 - 3. Encouragement to trust in God alone and not men - Isaiah 51:1-16
 - 4. Summons to Israel to return to God's favor - Isaiah 51:17-52:12
 - 5. Divine Servant to triumph through vicarious sufferings - Isaiah 52:13-53:12
 - 6. Consequent blessing to Israel - Isaiah 54:1-17
 - 7. Grace for all who trust in Christ - Isaiah 55:1-13
 - 8. Inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessing of Israel - Isaiah 56:1-8
 - 9. Condemnation of the wicked rulers of Israel - Isaiah 56:9-57:21
 - C. Program of peace - Isaiah 58:1-66:24
 - 1. Contrast between false and true worship - Isaiah 58:1-14
 - 2. Confession of Israel's depravity leading to God's deliverance - Isaiah 59:1-21
 - 3. Glorious prosperity and peace of the redeemed - Isaiah 60:1-22
 - 4. The Spirit-filled Christ by whom the kingdom comes - Isaiah 61:1-11
 - 5. Zion to be restored and glorified - Isaiah 62:1-63:6
 - 6. God's former mercies to cause Israel to plead for forgiveness - Isaiah 63:7-64:12
 - 7. God's mercy for spiritual Israel alone - Isaiah 65:1-25
 - 8. Externalism in worship to be replaced by heart sincerity - Isaiah 66:1-24

The Author of Isaiah

1. The author's name is given as Isaiah the son of Amoz. Apparently he was from a somewhat influential family as he had ties with the royal court.
2. Apparently Isaiah spent most of his time in Jerusalem, warning the kings against any foreign alliances. Ultimately his cause was doomed due to Israel's trust in men as opposed to trust in God.
3. Upon the death of Hezekiah, Isaiah enjoyed respect in spite of his unpopular views.
4. Unfortunately, Isaiah's ministry was doomed to failure from the start as seen in his temple vision in Isaiah 6. The people would rather listen to men rather than listen to God.

5. Isaiah prophesied through the reigns of four kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Tradition says he was martyred under the reign of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh.

Critical Theories of the Composition of Isaiah

Since Isaiah exhibits a tremendous amount of knowledge about future events, it has been one of the primary books attacked by the anti-supernatural mindset in modern scholarship. Archer identifies the four major stages of the development of Isaianic criticism as follows:

1. Stage 1 - Doederlein's assertion of a sixth-century date for Isaiah 40-66.
 - a. An eighth-century Isaiah could not have predicted the events described in Isaiah 40-66. Specifically the destruction of Jerusalem and the seventy-years captivity.
 - b. Isaiah could never have seen the rise of Cyrus the Great, much less mentioned him by name.
 - c. As a result, Isaiah was the work of at least two authors. Isaiah the Son of Amoz, and a second Isaiah living around 550 B.C. named Deutero-Isaiah. Further rationalists tried to split Isaiah up into more authors.
 - d. Others objected to the splitting up of Isaiah 40-66 into multiple authors and instead postulated a single author for Isaiah 40-66 living around 540 B.C. (Gesenius).
2. Stage 2 - Multiple authors assigned to Isaiah 1-39.
 - a. Isaiah 13-14 also betrays a knowledge of Babylon and hence could not have been written by Isaiah in the eighth century.
 - b. As time went on, the portions of Isaiah assigned to the eighth century eventually were whittled down to a few hundred verses.
3. Stage 3 - A third author postulated
 - a. Isaiah 40-66 apparently had many passages which could not have been written from Babylonia (the location of Deutero-Isaiah). Hence, these passage had to be written by a third author who lived in Palestine called Trito-Isaiah.
 - b. As a result, Isaiah 40-55 were written by Deutero-Isaiah somewhere in the region of Lebanon. Isaiah 56-66 were composed in Jerusalem around the year 450 B.C.
 - c. Later theorists saw additions to I, II, and III Isaiah from even later authors, even to the first century B.C.

With the discovery of a second-century B.C. Isaiah scroll at Qumran the assertion of first-century B.C. additions is shot to pieces.
4. Stage 4 - Reduction of Authors by Lowering the Date
 - a. In the twentieth century the number of authors for Isaiah has been reduced by asserting the book was written later.
 - b. For example, Isaiah 34-66 is asserted to have been written by a single author living in Jerusalem during the time of 540 B.C. (Charles Cutler Torrey).

- c. Some other scholars see the entire book as being the product of a single author or the product of an Isaianic school (Brownlee).

Critical Arguments For Source Division

Alleged Differences in Theme and Subject Matter

1. Isaiah 1-39 (Isaiah I) deals with contemporary issues, Isaiah 40-66 (Isaiah II) deals with the Babylonian exile and a return to the land. A futuristic viewpoint could not have been maintained over 66 chapters, and the idea of Isaiah being able to predict with accuracy the future is non-scientific and hence untenable (prophecy can not exist hence no prophet exists!).
 - a. Problems explaining away the prophecies in Isaiah II:
 - 1). The section in which Cyrus' name appears is a consistent whole. This disproves Cyrus being a late addition to the text. Even a close textual analysis of Isaiah II bears out the fact that Cyrus' name is not a late addition to the text.
 - 2). Josiah is mentioned by name three centuries before he was born (I Kings 13:2).
 - 3). It is the nature of God's prophetic revelation to mention people and places by name in order to prove the divine nature of such revelation when the prophetic event occurs.
 - 4). Historical events in the time of Isaiah II, namely the dismal spiritual climate in Jerusalem, would of necessity require extra-ordinary revelation from God. This extra-ordinary revelation would serve to bring hope to those alive during those dark days.
 - b. Prophecy in Isaiah I:
 - 1). Even Isaiah 1-39 contains significant prophecies. Examples include the destruction of Sennacherib's army (Isaiah 37:33-35), the defeat of Damascus (Isaiah 8:4, 7) and the destruction of Samaria (Isaiah 7:16). Others include the destruction of Babylon by Medo-Persia (Isaiah 13:17), and the eventual devastation of Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-20).
 - 2). Even Isaiah 6, considered to be definitely Isaianic by the critics, contains references to the destruction of Judah under Babylon.
 - 3). Isaiah 39:5-7 contains a reference to Israel being subjugated by the Babylonians after Hezekiah gave them the royal tour of Israel's treasury. At the time this was given, Babylon was a province under Assyria's domination.
 - c. The intention of Isaiah in Isaiah II:
 - 1). Isaiah II shows that the judgment which will come upon Israel is a result of their disobedience. Additionally, although they will be judged, God will regather them at a later time. This required the extra-ordinary prophecies found in Isaiah II.
 - 2). Passages such as Isaiah 42:9, 23; 43:9, 12; and 44:7-8 show that the predictions by God are meant to prove his absolute sovereignty over nations and events.

- d. The relationship of Isaiah II to Isaiah I:
 - 1). Isaiah I serves as a preparatory introduction to Isaiah II. In fact, the book of Isaiah is incomplete without both.
 - 2). Isaiah I speaks of what may happen if Israel did not repent. Isaiah II speaks of what will happen since Israel did not repent.
- e. The alleged Babylonian standpoint of Isaiah II:
 - 1). References to Babylon appear with less frequency in Isaiah II than Isaiah I.
 - 2). Isaiah II shows very little familiarity with Babylonian geography and a good deal of familiarity with Palestinian geography.
 - 3). The writer's geographical viewpoint is Palestinian.
 - a). Yahweh is said to send his decree to Babylon - Isaiah 43:14.
 - b). "From the east" and "from the far country" - Isaiah 46:11
 - 4). The author assumes the cities of Judah are still standing, something that would not be true in the sixth century.
- f. The pre-exilic composition of Isaiah II:
 - 1). The same evils are present in both Isaiah I and II, something that would not be true if Isaiah II was written 200 years after Isaiah I.
 - 2). In both Isaiah I and II a rampant hypocrisy invades the religion of Israel. For example, compare Isaiah 29:13 with Isaiah 58:2, 4.
 - 3). Isaiah II fits very closely the conditions prevalent under Manasseh.
 - 4). Idolatry is seen as widespread and rampant in Isaiah II, something that would not be the case in the sixth century.
 - 5). References are made to pre-exilic pagan practices in Isaiah II, such as the offering of babies to Molech and the fertility practices of Baal worship.
 - 6). The practices of committing idolatry in the groves and high-places does not fit the alluvial plain conditions of Babylon but does fit the mountainous and hilly terrain of Israel.
 - 7). There is no evidence of widespread and rampant idolatry after the captivity in any other book of the Old Testament.

Alleged Differences in Language and Style

1. It is asserted that differences in language, vocabulary, and style point to two different authors for Isaiah I and II.

However, many other ancient works of literature known to be composed by a single author exhibit many of the same differences in style, vocabulary, and language. Shakespeare's works can be seen to have passed through four stages. Milton's works also exhibit differences between his earlier and later works. This means nothing.

2. The similarities between Isaiah I and II far outweigh the differences.
 - a). The characteristic title of God, Holy One of Israel, occurs in both Isaiah I and II. This occurs 12 times in Isaiah I, 14 times in Isaiah II, and four times elsewhere in the Old Testament, Psalm 71:22; 89:18; Jeremiah 50:29, and 51:5.
 - b). At least forty to fifty phrases occur in both sections of Isaiah. This could not be the work of more than one author but in facts points to a single author.

Of course some say that the author of Isaiah II was extremely influenced by the writer of Isaiah I and hence used many of the same terms. This is circular reasoning. Isaiah I and Isaiah II are the work of two distinct authors because of their differences. Where there are similarities, it is because the author of Isaiah II copied Isaiah I. What came first? The chicken or the egg?

3. The similarity between Isaiah II and Micah, another eighth-century prophet, are striking.

Alleged Differences in Theological Ideas

1. Critics point out that the author of Isaiah II had a much more developed sense of God's sovereignty over the nations than Isaiah I.
True. But there are not contradictions between the theology of Isaiah I and II, and there is every reason to see these differences as the result of the conditions prevalent during the reign of Manasseh as opposed to the reign of Hezekiah.
2. Every point of theology in Isaiah II is contained, at least in germ form, in Isaiah I.

Additional Proofs for the Unity of Isaiah

1. Jesus Ben Sirach clearly assumes that Isaiah wrote both parts of Isaiah.
2. The New Testament writers unanimously quote both sections of Isaiah as being the work of Isaiah.
 - a). Matthew 12:17-18 quotes Isaiah 42:1.
 - b). Luke 3:4 quotes Isaiah 40:3 as being from Isaiah.
 - c). Acts 8:28 quotes Isaiah 53 as belonging to Isaiah.
 - d). John 12:38-41 quotes both sections of Isaiah and ascribe each to Isaiah.
3. A major problem with the Deutero-Isaiah theory is that the identity of the author of Isaiah II has been lost. How could one who penned such a work as Isaiah II remain anonymous to all?

Also, one of the requirements for any prophetic work in the Old Testament to be accepted by the Jews was that the author be known and considered a prophet.

4. Isaiah II is written in pure Hebrew common to the eighth century. The Hebrew of Ezra and Nehemiah from the fifth century is markedly different and unlike Isaiah II. This would not be the case if both Isaiah II and Ezra/Nehemiah were written at the same time.

5. Isaiah 13, the prediction about the future judgment of Babylon, would be out of place had it been inserted by a later author. It fits in very well with the flow of thought found in Isaiah's section on God's judgment against nations.
6. Some passages in the writings of the seventh century prophets, such as Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Nahum show that these prophets apparently knew and may have even borrowed from Isaiah II. This would not be possible had Isaiah II been written in the sixth century.

Major Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament

Genesis 3:15	Messiah born of a woman and will crush the head of Satan
Genesis 22:18	He will be of the family of Abraham
Genesis 49:10	He will be from Judah
Deuteronomy 18:15	He will be a prophet like Moses
Psalm 2:1-2	He will be tried by Gentiles and rejected by the Jewish people
Psalm 16:10	Christ's body will not see corruption but will be resurrected
Psalm 22:1	He will be rejected by the Father at his crucifixion
Psalm 22:6-7	He will be mocked at his crucifixion
Psalm 22:22	Christ will glorify God in his Church
Psalm 40:6-8	Christ delighted to do the Father's will
Psalm 69:7-12	Christ would be rejected by men
Psalm 69:21	Christ would drink gall at his crucifixion
Psalm 89:4	Christ will be of the eternal seed of David
Psalm 89:26-28	Christ will be God's eternal son, His unique first born
Psalm 110:1	He will ascend to the Father's right hand
Psalm 110:4	He will be a priest like Melchizedek
Psalm 132:11	He will be of the lineage of David
Isaiah 7:14	Christ will be virgin born
Isaiah 7:15-16	He will grow up in a land under foreign domination
Isaiah 9:1-2	He will minister in Galilee
Isaiah 9:7	He will be of the line of David, the eternal Son of God
Isaiah 11:2	He will be anointed with the Holy Spirit
Isaiah 11:4	He will minister perfect justice for the poor and meek
Isaiah 24:16	Christ will offer salvation to the whole world
Isaiah 40:3	He will have a forerunner
Isaiah 42:1	Christ will be the anointed servant of Yaweh
Isaiah 42:2	His ministry will be gentle
Isaiah 42:6	Christ will be the fulfillment of God's covenant
Isaiah 49:6	Christ will be a light to the Gentiles
Isaiah 52:14	Christ would be disfigured by abuses
Isaiah 53:4	Christ will bear our diseases
Isaiah 53:5	Christ will provide atonement for sin
Isaiah 53:9	Christ will be buried in a rich man's tomb
Isaiah 53:10	Christ will be resurrected from the dead
Daniel 9:24	Predicts the exact date of Christ's entry into Jerusalem before his crucifixion
Micah 5:2	Christ would be born in Bethlehem
Zechariah 9:9	He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey
Zechariah 11:12	Christ would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver
Zechariah 12:10	Christ would be pierced for our transgressions