

Isaiah



Jim McGuiggan

*The Book
of
Isaiah*

Jim McGuiggan



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Commentary on Isaiah

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author or publisher, including translations.

With grateful appreciation

for

William C. (Bill) Johnson

Who in the beginning thought

what I had to say was useful

enough to go into print.

FOREWORD

This new expanded commentary on Isaiah will replace the earlier little survey edition. I hope you will find it useful. That is my intention. I've tried to explain some of the difficulties and bring out some of the riches in as simple and plain a way as possible. If you're a scholar you may be disappointed! At least we know we've made improvement over the previous one.

If you have comments or questions concerning the material, please drop me a line. This is extremely helpful to me and I appreciate those of you who take the time to do so.

Genuinely,
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I

Introductory Material

Some Difficulties Facing the Student of Isaiah

1. As with all OT prophetic books, if you want a working knowledge of Isaiah's writings, you must be prepared to gain a good working knowledge of the world of Isaiah.

2. As with some other OT prophetic books, you must be prepared for the book's disregard, at times, for chronological progression. Westerners like their books to go from year one to year forty in correct sequence. The OT prophetic books don't always cater to what we want.

3. As with all other OT prophetic literature, you must be prepared for the sometimes confusing way in which the speaker changes from one person to another. Sometimes God is speaking and then, without warning, someone else is speaking (the prophet, the nation, enemies, a specific group within the nation etc.).

4. As with all other OT prophetic books, you must be prepared for a sometimes confusing change of addressees. In a verse a prophet may be addressing the Lord and before the verse is through he is addressing the nation or some group within the nation.

5. As is frequently the case in other OT prophets, Isaiah doesn't tell us when he received his oracle so you're left wondering what period of his ministry is in view and what the historical context is. Sometimes you can make a really educated guess but, fairly often, you make a choice among several real possibilities and, sometimes, you don't have enough *specific* material to know how to choose.

6. Some times there are independent oracles sitting side by side. Oracles dealing with different times and circumstances sit side by side. Since we spend more time in the historical narratives which most often develop chronologically, those having these independent visions sitting side by side can lead to confusion.

7. It isn't always easy to strike a balance between letting Isaiah

speaking in and to OT times and letting him speak his truths related to NT times. Isaiah is an OT figure with a message to OT people in an OT context. To divorce him from all that is to do his writings violence. But in light of Jewish national solidarity and God's purpose in Christ we are not to think it strange that Isaiah speaks for generations long after him. We mustn't be so saddled with the idea that Isaiah is a man of his day that everything must be given a meaning within an Assyrian context. Nor, because God's purposes culminate in Christ, are we to make everything Messianic.

8. It isn't always easy to spot the fulfillment of prophecies since:

- Sometimes the prophecies are not fulfilled because conditions change within Israel or other nations. Be sure to see Jeremiah 18:1-12 as the principle upon which this operates. And note Isaiah 48:18.
- Sometimes the prophecies are delayed in their fulfillment for the reason given just above.
- Sometimes the prophecies are partly fulfilled for the very same reason.
- Sometimes the prophecies are couched in non-literal speech. That is, sometimes they are not intended to be fulfilled literally.

ISAIAH: The Man

I take it that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, wrote the whole "book of Isaiah." I'll say something about that later in this introductory material. There are a number of things we can learn about Isaiah from the Scriptures although, since he is by far the most prominent of the prophets, what we learn is very little.

1. He was a married man and had two children (7:3; 8:1-3). His wife is called a "prophetess." Maybe that was just because she was the wife of the prophet. More likely, it is probably because she was a prophetess.

2. His own name and the names of his boys were prophetic. The older son (Shear-jashub) spoke of the certain preservation of

a remnant of Israel despite all the national troubles they would experience. (There is also implied in his name a call for trust in *Jehovah*.)

The younger boy was called Maher-shalal-hashbaz. This spoke of God's fulfilling his word through the Assyrian armies against Syria (under Rezin) and Israel (the northern kingdom) under Pekah. The Assyrians would eagerly rush to make spoil and prey of those two kingdoms which were troubling Judah. (See the historical survey.)

Isaiah's own name was a constant proclamation. *Jehovah* is salvation or rescue! *Jehovah*, as distinct from political shrewdness, idols or idol worship, military power or foreign alliances!

3. It's hard to say if he was kin to the royal family. It's certain that he was historiographer of the Judean court. 2 Chronicles 26:22. This would explain the easy access he had to kings (Isaiah 7:3; 38 & 39). It would give him inside information on the fortunes of the nation, good and bad.

4. Like all the other prophets, Isaiah was a sinner and had his human limitations. He was capable of being made afraid (see the comments on 8:11-14) and needed God to speak to him "with a strong hand" about it. He makes his own confession of sinfulness in chapter 6 (see the comments there). As I see it, earlier in his life, Isaiah trusted in God *and* the king as distinct from God *as* the King.

5. He came through in the end (see 37:21-38) as one who recognized the sovereign power of *Jehovah*. He had lived through the prosperous times of Uzziah and Jotham when the nation was militarily strong. He experienced the decline under Ahaz with the civil war, the alliance with Assyria and the terrible financial burden of that alliance. He prophesied through the see-saw days of Hezekiah and learned from experience and revelation that trust in the Holy One of Israel was the needed human response. And he shared that experience and that message with countless millions.

6. Isaiah 1:1 tells us of Isaiah seeing visions in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. It says nothing of his prophesying under Manasseh. And yet 37:38 mentions the death of Sennacherib and the accession of Esarhaddon in 681.

Thiele (CHK) holds that Manasseh was co-regent with Hezekiah, his father, for ten or eleven years and a weak Jewish tradition says Isaiah was sawn asunder under Manasseh (Hebrews 11:37?).

2 Chronicles 33:10 tells us that “Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed.” 2 Kings 21:10 informs us that “Jehovah spake by his servants the prophets” concerning Manasseh and the evil of his reign.

What if, in the later years of Hezekiah (during the co-regency of Manasseh), Isaiah (and others) saw the evil develop in the land as it began to show itself in Manasseh? What if some of the scalding words of Isaiah in his book deal with the horror of the early days of Manasseh’s influence? Would that not give us better insight into some of the chapters of accusation and condemnation? And it would allow Isaiah to fail to mention Manasseh as king during his prophetic ministry.

THE MESSAGE

The whole Bible has a single message

There are those like Von Rad, Smend and Wright who deny that there is a single message in the OT. There are those who think there is one but who don’t agree on what it is. (James Barr remarked: “When there is one landscape, many different pictures may nevertheless be painted.” I’m one of those, right or wrong, who thinks that there is a single message in the OT. Roughly stated it is this: *An all-powerful God seeks in love to live in loving fellowship with mankind.*

That single message is proclaimed in the OT at different times, to different *generations of people* living under different sets of *circumstances* and having different *needs to be met*. This means that while the single message will always be proclaimed, different aspects of that single message will be developed according to the needs of the hour.

In times of celebration it will be proclaimed with joy! In times of despair it will be defended against objections! Sometimes it will be expressed in redemptive acts of God which are rehearsed

in literature. Sometimes the people addressed are victims of oppression who need to be assured that the appearance of things doesn't alter the truth of the central message.

This central message is expressed in the sacrificial and priestly arrangement of Judaism (though this isn't the place to develop the truth of that statement). So that the literature which governs and regulates that system has its place in the grand message of the whole.

(None of this should be surprising. If you were invited to speak on the resurrection of Jesus Christ to a group of radiant disciples you would develop it in one direction. If that evening you were invited to speak on the same subject to a group of agnostics and atheists, you'd develop it in another direction. The needs would be different.

If you were asked to say a few words to a radiantly happy pair who had just been married, something about the love of God, you would take one route. If you were asked to speak a few words about the love of God to a mother whose daughter was just killed in a road accident you would take another.)

In the OT the single message is told over and over again by the use of recurring themes. I'd like to list a few of them and say a word or two about each of them. *Listen*, these themes becomes a biblical "shorthand" for the central truth or message of the OT. I'll explain what I mean very shortly.

The Creation. To an enlightened Jew, creation wasn't a matter for philosophical or scientific debate. It spoke of two things – the power of God and the power of God manifested in love for mankind.

You can see this especially clearly in Psalm 136:5-9 where we are repeatedly told that creation is an expression of God's loving kindness to man. And you can see it, too, in Psalm 8 where the almighty power of God is expressed in bestowing honor on mankind. See also Genesis 1:26-28.

The Covenants. The covenant theme is so prominent in the Bible that some writers (like Payne & Eichrodt) think it is the theme of the Bible (OT in particular). My own view is that the covenants initiated by God were one expression of that already

existing commitment God has to mankind. Because he was already committed to mankind he manifested himself as a covenant-making God.

The very fact that God bothers to make covenants with man tells us something about God and how he feels toward man. He seeks *fellowship* with him. *Loving fellowship*. While God is the infinitely superior “partner” in the covenants and while the covenantal clauses he lays down are not negotiable, still, he makes it clear that he wants fellowship with man – loving (see this developed shortly) fellowship.

There are six major covenants I’d like to list. 1) The covenant with Noah, 2) with Abraham, 3) with Israel, 4) with Aaron, 5) with David, and 6) the “new” one with Israel into which the nations are invited.

These are all interrelated but they are independent concepts. Each of them has its own peculiar significance and contribution to the unfolding drama of human history under God.

And while the covenants may be made *with* a specific individual or group they have a universal goal in mind.

The covenant with Noah is universal in its terms. The one with Abraham is so that “all nations” would be blessed. The Mosaic covenant *nationalized* the seed of Abraham through Jacob but they were intended to be God’s servants to the nations of the world that the nations might be blessed. The same is true of the other covenants. (I’ve developed this a bit in my little book called: *The Reign of God*.)

The covenants are all *gracious things*. They are the expressions of God’s *love* (for examples, see Deut.7:6-12; Psa.89:18-37 and Gen.6:8 & chapter 9).

The covenants call people into *fellowship* with God. But it is a call to fellowship with a God who *loves* and *therefore* it is a call to fellowship with a God who will deal with sin. Be sure to see Exodus 34:6-7 where God’s love is set alongside of (*not over against*) his dealing with sin. In dealing with sin, God is not being loveless. Holiness is love refusing to live at peace with sin!

The Exodus from Egypt. It is hard to overestimate the theological significance of the Exodus for Israel.

- *It underscores God's faithfulness* in regard to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See Exodus 2:23-25.
- *It is connected again and again with God's intention to create a community* which lives in fellowship with him. See Gen.17:7; Lev.22:33; 25:38; 26:45 and numerous other places.
- *It becomes (in conjunction with the covenantal-law) the ground upon which God calls Israel to upright living.* For example, they were not to extort from others since they had been rescued from Egyptian oppression (Lev.25:35-38). Slaves were not to be mistreated because Israel was a rescued slave (Deut.15:12-15). Widows and orphans were to be cared for because of Israel's rescue from the oppressor (Deut. 16:10-12).

The name JEHOVAH is related peculiarly to the exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 6:3ff) and it becomes the shorthand way of summing up all that the redemption from Egypt entailed. This is true. So when in Leviticus 18-26 he lays down principles of conduct he signs them repeatedly with: *I am Jehovah*. Read through those chapters and see how often he does that. In saying, "Jehovah," he is calling the Exodus to their minds and all that that involves.

It manifests the reality and power of God over against the impotence of idols and the unreality of the gods. Each of the wonders performed against Egypt spoke against the objects of their worship. See the discussion in the commentaries concerning the gods worshiped, such as Ra, Osiris, Geb, Hekt and the rest.

It manifests the power of God over earthly kings and their armies. (And in attacking the household of Pharaoh in the death of the firstborn there is God's attack on Egypt's chief deity, Amon, who is represented by the Pharaoh.) See Exodus 15.

It manifests the power of God as it expresses itself in love toward Israel. This is spelled out in Psalm 136:10-15.

The Land of Promise. Woven into the Abrahamic covenant is the land of promise (see Genesis 11:31-12:3; 15:17 and elsewhere). *Land* is such a central theme in the OT that Brueggemann argues it is the theme of the OT.

Adam's rebellion leads to "loss of land." He loses dominion over the earth which God made for him and he is cast out of the garden where God met with him. Because of sin, Cain is made a fugitive on the earth, a wanderer who is forced to "go out" from the presence of God to wander. Noah's generation brings a curse on their earth and the Babelites (Gen.11:4) who refuse God's judgment on sin lose their unity of language and find themselves scattered abroad (11:8-9).

Genesis 1-11 speaks of people being driven from land and 12-5 speaks of people moving toward land. Genesis 1-11 speaks of people losing land because of sin and 12-5 speaks of people moving to gain land because of grace.

- *The promised land is a gift!* Israel tried to seize it by force of arms (Num.14:38-45) and failed. They are not permitted to strike a single blow against the first and chief city in Canaan (Jericho). The city is given to them through faith. This simply reflects the whole history of Israel's "landedness." They either have it by God's gift or they don't have it.
- *The promised land is a place of fellowship!* The world was made so God could fellowship mankind. The promised land is always associated with the creation of the Israelite community (see, for example, Exodus 2:23ff through Joshua 23:14-16). See especially, Lev. 25:23.
- *The promised land illustrates the sovereignty of God!* Israel couldn't seize the land but God could expel nations before Israel and give the land to Israel. See Nehemiah 9:7,22-25 & Psalm 136:17-22.
- *The promised land demands a certain lifestyle!* To live in the land is to live with God who is the owner of the land (Lev. 25:23). It is to be a "sojourner" and a "stranger" with him in his land. To break covenant loyalty is to "pollute the land" (see a concordance on that phrase) and to bring on it a curse. And as the curse on the earth in Adam's day and downward reflected the fall from glory of mankind then, the fruitlessness of Canaan reflected Israel's failure to live up to the "glory of God" of which they fell short.

Warnings against all kinds of wickedness are given to the new pilgrims in the land. For such wickednesses other nations were driven out (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 7:1-6,16,25ff; 9:4). Covenant loyalty is to be maintained “that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” See Deut. 24:4 and Joshua 23:14-16.

The Wilderness Wandering. Here is another motif full of theological significance and from which Paul takes much instruction. See 1 Corinthians 10:1ff.

- *The wilderness wandering underscored the sinfulness of man!* This is clearly seen in Numbers 13 & 14 and Paul makes this very point in 1 Corinthians 10. The wilderness is the epitome of “landlessness” and all that that would mean to an enlightened Jew. “Wilderness people” were people under judgment, wanderers under the chastisement of God.
- *The wilderness wandering stressed the almighty power of God!* As Brueggemann points out, Jehovah supplies in the wilderness what normally could only be supplied in a “landed condition.” In Exodus 16:3 Israel speaks of Egypt as a place of bread, flesh and fullness. In 16:8 God responds to their murmuring and promises bread, flesh and fullness. In 16:12 he repeats this word and says that by this they would know that he was JEHOVAH (see above on that name). It is in the wilderness (16:10) as well as in Egypt that the glory of God showed itself.
- *The wilderness wandering stressed the utter dependence of man!* See this stressed in Deut. 8:1-10. The wilderness wandering showed Israel its vulnerability. They had to depend on God for their food, drink and clothing. And they got those only because God had promised they would. They lived because of his word!

Let me leave it at that and sum up what I’m getting at. Each of these themes I’ve mentioned contributes to the proclamation of the single message of the Bible (OT in particular).

When “creation” or “covenant” or “exodus” is mentioned in the ears of an enlightened Jew it becomes shorthand for the single message we’ve stated. When the prophets mentioned “exile” (land

loss), they're speaking of more than physical removal from a piece of property. Loss of fellowship is involved with all the terrors that involves. The name JEHOVAH isn't just a sound to him. It conjures up the redemptive history Israel has known and the lifestyle they were called to. SO, *when Isaiah mentions any of these themes you are to remember what they stand for!*

Isaiah's Contribution to That Single Message

Isaiah's message has two sides to it. It tells us how God feels about mankind (Israel in particular) and tells us how mankind is to respond toward God. We'll deal, briefly, with God's commitment first.

God's Commitment to Mankind

According to Isaiah God has a commitment to all mankind. This is in keeping with the Abrahamic covenant which was to result in the blessing of "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3). Isaiah will stress this truth in 42:1ff; 49:5ff; chapter 56 and 65:1. Israel is to be God's servant to the nations.

According to Isaiah God is peculiarly (not, exclusively) committed to Israel through whom he would save the world. See 7:9; 8:5-15; 26:3-4; 28:16; 30:15.

According to Isaiah God's commitment is a loving commitment. This is seen in the numerous passages which speak of God offering redemption and forgiveness both to Israel *and* foreigners. Grace is nothing more than love forgiving sin and offering fellowship.

But this commitment *to love* means a commitment to chastisement, to disciplining. The lover of whom Isaiah speaks is a *real*, a committed lover. He is willing to take the trouble to "overhaul" the ones he loves. First he accepts them as they are (ungodly but trusting) and then he begins an "overhaul" job. When love acts in this direction it is called *holiness!*

The God Isaiah proclaims is called "the Holy One of Israel." He is never the "loveless" one of Israel even when he is chastising and disciplining for love and holiness don't stand over against each other. Holiness is love working at cleaning up the one loved.

Wasn't it C.S. Lewis who said that one may love another in spite of his being dirty, smelly and unclean but never *because* he is that?! Whom he loves, God chastens. We may love someone while he is objectionable but if we love him we cannot keep from wanting to remove the truly objectionable for love seeks one's highest good.

And because that loving commitment is real and it's for all mankind, we, as sinners, involve God in a "conflict of interests." He wishes to bless us *all*. But there are many who refuse to be blessed in spite of his love for them. Furthermore, they wish to exploit and oppress others who are loved by God also. God, then, is compelled to protect his loved ones who are being oppressed from his loved ones who are doing the oppressing. So he punishes the oppressors!

This is not an act of lovelessness. It is the result of a wicked choice on the part of the oppressors and a *consequent* conflict of interests on God's part. Perhaps I can explain best by illustrating. Suppose you are teaching a class of young people something of real importance and benefit. Out of the fifteen students twelve are keenly interested. Three are uninterested and are disruptive. You wish to be a blessing to all fifteen and make repeated appeals to the disruptive but they refuse to be blessed or to let others be blessed. Finally you expel them from the class. This is punishment but it isn't lovelessness! In fact, it is because you love the twelve that you must act on their behalf. The expulsion isn't done out of malice and you continue to wish, fervently, that the three offenders would return penitent. It might appear to someone who didn't know all the facts that your expulsion of the three proved you didn't care for the offenders. So it is with the God Isaiah (and the other prophets) proclaimed.

I tire of hearing holiness divorced from love. I tire of hearing that love is weak without holiness. Holiness is love expressing itself in one of its many facets. See Exodus 34:6-7 where they are dealt with as two sides of one coin. Isaiah's God is the Lover of all men who will not simply stand by while people make pigs of themselves. He's the Holy One of Israel!

Mankind's Commitment to God

Because of what Jesus said in Matthew 22:34-40 we can know what Isaiah (and every other speaker for God) called for. Christ said we could write across the OT (as God's requirement from man): "First, love God and, second, love your neighbor as yourself." He said that on these two commandments the whole OT hangs. As a door hangs on hinges so man's response to God hangs on these two commands.

Now this isn't just a fundamental truth, it's a hermeneutical guide so important it can't be over-emphasized. The OT is a long book with a lot of regulations, statutes, commands, edicts (call them what you will) but the aim of them all and the summation of them all is that *love should hold sway!*

When dealing with human response to God, Christ said that Isaiah's ("all the prophets") call was: "Love God and your neighbor as yourself!" Paul in Romans 13:8-10 insists that there is no command that isn't fulfilled by loving. All the commandments are "summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (13:9). Christ knew what Isaiah was calling for! Paul knew what Isaiah was calling for! Read through Isaiah and *whatever* command you hear him uttering on God's behalf assure yourself that it comes under the heading of loving God and/or loving your neighbor as yourself.

Loveless obedience is legalism! Whatever thought, word, or deed it is that's loveless is without value in the eyes of God. See this spelled out in 1 Corinthians 13. Loveless submission profits no one.

When the prophet calls the people to trust in God, he's asking for a loving response to the God who, in love, has committed himself to them. *Faith* is love trusting. *Repentance* is love changing its mind in a loving direction. *Obedience* is love doing what it's told. *Prayer* is love on its knees. *Peace* is love enjoying harmony in relationships. *Forgiving* is love tearing down walls. *Reconciliation* is love building bridges. *Patience* is love doing it over and over again. *Endurance* is love refusing to quit. *Giving* is love being itself. *Work* is love with its sleeves rolled up. *Sacrifice* is love wearing its best suit. *Truth* is love talking. *Joy* is love

responding to good news. *Gentleness* is love handling the fragile. *Discipline* is love standing up for people by standing up to people. *Honesty* is love's response to graft and corruption. *Sympathy* is love feeling cold when another has no blanket or clothes. *Service* is love on its knees with a towel in its hands. *Unity* is love tying needy people together. *Anger* is love responding to injustice.

Behind all the commands, behind the code which is given to regulate conduct is a Person, a loving Person who wishes people to love him in return. A Person who wants men and women to live in loving communion and fellowship one with another. The prophets don't just call for obedience to a code, they call for love of a Person and persons.

Isaiah's Use of Recurring Themes

Look again at the five motifs we listed above and familiarize yourself with their theological significance. When Isaiah mentions them or alludes to them you need to remind yourself of the truths he is stressing.

The prophet will speak of God as creator over and over again (examples: 40:12-26; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12,18; 48:13; 50:2-3; 51:13,16). Note what we said above about the significance creation has for the enlightened Jew.

He will mention the Abrahamic and Davidic connection in 7:2,13; 9:6ff; 11:1ff; 22:22; 55:3-5 with 29:22; 41:8; 51:2 and 63:16. Note what we've said above on these covenants and if you wish to see this theme developed why don't you look at my *Reign of God*.

He will allude to the Exodus in so many places. See 10:24-26; 11:11,15-16; 17:12-13 (?); 43:3-end; 50:1ff; 51:9-10; 63:11. Note, too, what the Exodus event meant in relation to God's relation to idols, covenantal faithfulness and other truths mentioned above.

He will speak of the promised land in too many passages for us to begin citing. He will make use of the truth that God's curse on the earth is a visible reminder of man's fall from the glory God gave him. A cursed earth reflects the marred glory of man but a rejuvenated earth from which the curse is removed is fitting to express a renewed relationship of man with God. See this

developed by Paul in Romans 8:17-23 and note Isaiah 24:1-6; 34:5-17; 62:4-9; 65:17-25.

He will allude to the wilderness wandering Israel had experienced and contrast it with the “wilderness” they’ll travel through in their second exodus. See this in sections such as chapter 35; 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 48:20-22. These new “wilderness experiences” are for trusting people whereas the first was due to unbelief. This second “wilderness experience” is more glorious for the righteous than the former one was for the then righteous. Check the notes above on this theme.

Some of the challenges to Isaiah’s central message

Note what I’ve said the central message of the OT is. We have an all-powerful God. That all-powerful God loves. He loves all mankind and not just a select few. He seeks to live in fellowship, community, with mankind. That fellowship must be a fellowship of love. The prophet will have to:

- Proclaim that God’s love for Israel is genuine in the face of internal turmoil, external invasions, losses in battle, deportations on a giant scale. Note how he handles this in 10:5-19; 49:24–50:3; 59:12.
- Proclaim that God’s power is limitless in the face of military success enjoyed by idol worshipers. Note his allusions to God’s creative power, his sarcastic treatment of idols (44 & 46) and his control of history (45).
- Proclaim that God’s love is not exhausted when it is extended to Israel but that he loves all nations, wants them blessed and wants Israel to be his servant to bless them. Note this in 42:1ff; 49:5ff; chapter 56. This is especially needed since Israel regards itself not only as elect but as *elite*.
- Proclaim the reality and *meaning* of God’s love in the face of Israel’s (and foreigners’, too) shallow ritualism, empty formalism. He will downgrade their external religion and show that the world’s Lover will not tolerate flagrant ungodliness. Not in Israel or the foreigners. See 1:2-17; 30:27-28; 33:13-16a 47:8,10ff. Thus the fellowship which

God seeks is a *loving* fellowship.

- Proclaim the trustworthiness of God to live up to his covenantal commitments. This is needed since Israel becomes sick with the “atheism of force” (G.A. Smith) and doesn’t trust God to accomplish what he says he will do. See this developed in chapter 29 and numerous other places.

II

Comments

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF ISAIAH?

I'm one of those who believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book. I believe John Willis stated it well. If, says he, there are verses here and there which were not written by Isaiah himself, then they were written by some Spirit-moved author (Isaiah, page 31).

1. *I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because not only does the NT give no hint whatever of multiple authors, it openly encourages us to accept one author (by quoting from earlier and later chapters and ascribing it all to Isaiah).*
2. *I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because the Jewish nation which first received and treasured it have held no other view of its authorship (at least not until some Gentile scholars came along quite recently).*
3. *I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because it is his name that is given in the superscription and in several other places in the book.*

No one expects of a modern author that he put his name above every paragraph or page that he writes. It is enough to have it on the book cover or title page. That Isaiah's name is given only on several occasions is no reason to doubt that the whole book is his.

And I don't accept the argument that the inscription (1:1) *excludes* the material in 13-21 & 23 just because it says Isaiah saw things concerning Judah and Jerusalem. I believe that 13-21 (and all the rest of Isaiah's book) directly and immediately concerns Judah and Jerusalem. In Isaiah 7 & 8 he sees things concerning Israel and Syria which immediately concern Judah and Jerusalem. Foreign nations come within the prophet's vision precisely

because they relate to Judah and Jerusalem.

And Ezekiel (2:3; 3:5-6) is explicitly told that he is not being sent to foreigners. Yet we have chapters 25-32 which are leveled against foreign nations. Since we know Ezekiel is *not* commissioned to speak to foreign nations (3:5, should we conclude that 25-32 didn't come from Ezekiel? No. We should conclude that material which deals with nations involved in the destiny and behavior of Israel deals with Israel.

4. *I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because the opposing view not only becomes increasingly more complex but because the advocates of multiple authorship cannot agree with one another at fundamental levels.*

It was thought at first that there were two Isaiahs. Then it became three. And then again, it was four. And there are respectable scholars of the multiple authorship school who insist that internal evidence demands a "school of authors."

Not only do these scholars disagree with one another as to the number of authors, they can't agree as to the location (where they lived while writing) or the *time* (when they lived) of the multiple authors.

This would surely suggest that the evidence on which all this divergence is based can hardly be clear evidence. But if it isn't that clear, then the firm but reserved judgment of someone like R.K. Harrison, "not proven," is the judgment to make.

5. *I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because there is no NEED to have another view of the book's authorship.*

I genuinely do believe that the objections to a single author can be reasonably handled. And if that is true then we don't need this new view which has become increasingly complex and which has the advocates of the view in such disarray.

- *Argument based on linguistic differences* between the earlier and later chapters of the book is, to say the least,

slender support against the testimony of two thousand years in favor of single authorship. T. K. Cheyne who firmly opposed a single author view (and was thoroughly acquainted with OT syntax and vocabulary) confessed: “My own opinion is that the peculiar expressions of the latter prophecies are, on the whole, not such as to necessitate a different linguistic stage from the historical Isaiah; and that, consequently, the decision of the critical question will mainly depend on other than purely linguistic questions.”

- *Argument based on differences of topic or prophetic method* in the earlier and later sections of the book is flimsy. One could as easily prove the existence of deutero, trito (or “school” of) Paul by this method as a multiple authorship of Isaiah. Where such differences exist, we should admit they exist and look around for reasonable suggestions as to why they exist. Multiple authorship is only one suggestion out of many, and in light of the strength of the one author testimony (including the NT evidence), it isn’t the most persuasive.
- *Argument based on the “historical setting” of 40-66.* If there’s any strength in the “multiple authors” viewpoint it’s to be found here. I judge the rest of the argumentation to be weak indeed but I think this argument (which is the one most used these days) has some weight.

The prophets in *predicting* characteristically speak to their own generation *about* future generations. They *don’t* usually speak *to* the future generations as if they were present with them.

A perfect illustration of what is *usual* in the prophets is found in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and 29:22-29. Moses there speaks *to* his generation *about* future generations if they do not manifest covenant loyalty.

This means that, if Isaiah 40-66 is really prediction it would follow the usual prophetic procedure and speak *TO* an 8th century generation *ABOUT* a 6th century generation. But when you look at Isaiah 40-66 (so the argument runs) you find him speaking to a 6th century generation and not an 8th century generation. The obvious conclusion then is that 40-66 is not prediction! If it were

prediction we'd have him speaking TO an 8th century group ABOUT a 6th century group. That is what the prophets invariably do – they speak to their own generation *about* the coming generation.

Isaiah 40-66 speaks TO people *already* in captivity or preparing to move out of captivity or having already returned from captivity. It pleads with a 6th century generation and not an 8th century generation. If the section, we're told, was abstracted from its present place and controversy, it would be taken as being spoken/written in the 6th century rather than the 8th. Be patient for just a little while longer on this.

Let me illustrate this. Read now if you would, Deuteronomy 28:15-68. The speech there is *characteristic* of the prophetic manner. Suppose now that you read a chapter or two later:

“The foreigners see the plagues of this land and the sickness with which Jehovah has made it sick; and that the whole land is brimstone and salt ... it is not sown, grass doesn't grow ... and the nations are asking, Why has Jehovah done this to this land? And men are telling them it is because they have forsaken the covenant of Jehovah and went and worshiped other gods. Therefore the anger of Jehovah has been poured out upon them and he rooted them out in anger. Return unto the Lord, obey his voice according to all that he commands thee this day and Jehovah will bring you out of your captivity. And he will bring you back into the land which your fathers possessed. For Jehovah will rejoice over you again as he rejoiced over your fathers; therefore choose life that ye may live.”

What would you make of that? I'm sure you'll admit that your first reaction would be that the speaker is describing things *as they are* (the people are in captivity) and as they could be (they could be restored if obedient). 28:15-68 is the *characteristic* speech of prediction, this last piece is the *characteristic* of Isaiah 40-66. This piece I've just used for illustrative purposes comes from Deuteronomy 29:22–30:19 (various verses). I've changed it, of course. In Deuteronomy *it is clearly future* and contingent on their apostatizing and returning to God. But when you change the tenses (as I

did) the most natural understanding of it is that the section is speaking of things *as they are while the speaker is speaking*.

The language of *predictive* prophecy is characterized by words such as “shall” and “will” and “in that day.”

When Moses spoke of future captivity and future restoration from captivity he spoke *to* the people he actually lived with, his generation.

When Hosea spoke of future captivity and future restoration for Ephraim (Israel) he spoke *to* the people he actually lived with, his generation.

When Amos, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the rest of the prophets spoke of future captivity for the nation, they spoke *to* their contemporaries.

Isaiah in 40-66 doesn't speak *to* the people he actually lives with, but *to* a generation not yet born.

When other prophets spoke of the future they spoke *to* the generation they actually lived with *about* a generation not yet born.

When Isaiah speaks in 40-66 he doesn't speak *to* his own generation *about* a coming generation; he speaks to the coming generation *about* the distress they are already in and of how they can be rescued from it.

Now, until you feel the weight of that argument, you won't be hearing very well what the “multiple authorship” school are saying. I'm not saying you have to agree with their view, I'm simply saying you must at least give them a fair hearing. There aren't many things more irritating than someone who rejects what you have to say without *really* understanding what you are saying.

The bottom line in this argument is that the language of Isaiah 40-66, when *compared with the prophetic speech of the OT*, is not *predictive!* It is *descriptive!* Isaiah is describing things *as they are!* And he is pleading with the people who are now suffering distress to repent and lift up their heads because deliverance is near. Since Isaiah, son of Amoz, wasn't alive during the Babylonian captivity, the “Isaiah” of 40-66 is not the son of Amoz but some other prophetic genius or geniuses.

There are some things we need to say in response to all this.

There *is* such a thing as an “historical perfect” in the Scriptures

and God does indeed sometimes speak of things that are not as though they were. Romans 4:17 describes God as one who does such a thing. Note that the verse almost makes it a trait of God. Do see the passage. “Historical perfects” may have *some* contribution to make to an over all explanation of Isaiah 40-66. Be sure to see Isa. 9:2-6.

There *are* large sections of Scripture which deal with future events and which describe them as present and past events. This is characteristic of much of the apocalyptic literature. Daniel 7 and 8 well illustrate this and so does much of Revelation. Daniel sees the careers of the 4 beasts as having taken place and sees the judgment of the 4th beast as completed.

Perhaps a better illustration of this phenomenon is in Ezekiel’s experience. He foresees the future judgment in chapter 9, sees himself seeing it and hears himself protest to God while it is going on (9:8). In 11:13, still in vision (11:24), he sees the future death of Pelatiah accomplished, hears himself protesting again. In this vision *of the future* (the near future) he finds himself in discussion with God about (what is at the time of the vision) future judgment involving concrete people in future events. And they are being discussed in terms of accomplished fact as well as present events. Be sure to read Ezekiel 9-11.

Having seen the future as already accomplished, Ezekiel then returns from the receiving experience and tells the leaders what it was that he had seen and heard (11:25).

As they are presented to us there are certain differences between them and Isaiah 40-66 but the differences aren’t such as to negate the similarities. And it is only because we are *told* of Ezekiel’s circumstances when he received the visions from God that we *know* how to view his message. If we knew *how* and under what circumstances Isaiah received his message (40-66) perhaps all the difficulty would vanish.

But even if we grant a very unusual status to Isaiah 40-66, that doesn’t mean the unusual isn’t the actual. God isn’t tied down to one method of dealing with people through his spokesmen. If indeed Isaiah was “supernaturally transported” in visions to the generation of the Babylonian captivity to speak to them and

deliver God's message to them, why, then, he was! "God by divers portions and in divers manners" spake through the prophets (Heb. 1:1).

And it isn't clear that all (or even most) of Isaiah 40-66 speaks of generations and events beyond the lifetime of the son of Amoz.

- Take, for example, *the description of Israel's wickedness*, mentioned at various points throughout 40-66. It isn't at all clear that these all have reference to periods beyond Isaiah's lifetime.

In order to appreciate (not to say, agree with) the point I'm making, you would need to read these descriptions. In 56:9-57:13 we have one. Does that section speak of Israel while in Babylon captivity? For a dozen reasons that can't be so. Does it speak of Israel when they returned from Babylonian exile (as Willis holds)? That's arguable, but it is *far* from certain. (*See the comments there.*) Scholars have assigned this description to different historical periods from Ahaz in the 8th century to heretical Samaritans in the 5th. See, too, chapters 58 and 65.

- And take the matter of *restoration from exile*. It isn't at all clear that all allusions to restoration from exile relate to Judah and Babylonian captivity.

Israel, during the ministry and life of Isaiah, suffered many population losses. Under Ahaz the Syrians took away a "great multitude" of the people. Then the Assyrians took away Damascus (where that great multitude had been brought). Under Pekah the Assyrians carried off multitudes from the northern states of Israel. When Samaria fell under Hoshea many more were removed. Under Hezekiah Sennacherib took over 200,000 captives and we read that the captains of the Assyrian army came against Manasseh and took him captive. I'm assuming that captives were taken then, too.

In Isaiah 11:11-16 we have talk of restoration again of the people of God (Israel and Judah) from Assyrian captivity and from the lands where the Assyrians scattered them. (At this point it doesn't matter whether the restoration is literal/physical or

spiritual. See the comments there.)

Other prophets (Jeremiah, Hosea and Amos, as examples) spoke of the restoration of Israel (Ephraim) as well as Judah. And Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, will speak of rescue from Assyria and the cities of Egypt (where many fled, no doubt to escape the Assyrian scourge). See *Micah 7:12 and Isaiah 27:12-13*.

And while it is true, that "house of Jacob" is sometimes used in Isaiah to indicate Judah (10:21; 29:22), it isn't correct to conclude that Isaiah always uses "Jacob" to indicate only Judah. See 9:8; 17:4; 49:6 (and many other places where I judge that the whole nation is under consideration).

So, should it be that Isaiah speaks of a coming restoration from an *already existing* exile, we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that he is undoubtedly speaking of the Babylonian exile nor should we too quickly conclude that he is speaking of Judah. And there may be times when he has Judeans in mind who are already exiles, but not under *Babylon*.

You see, while we may not be keen to accept the biblical record as it sits before us, it sits as it does. Chronology isn't always an issue with the biblical record. And if the book of prophecy comes to us with oracles put together in such a way as to ignore chronology and stress similarity of material, that's how it is.

In Daniel we find chronology ignored. Chapter 6 is post 539 and chapter 7 is 553. Chapter 8 is 550 and chapter 9 is post 539. Chapter 5 is 539 and chapter 8 is 550 while chapter 10 is 536.

In Jeremiah chronology is thrown to the winds. Chapter 25 deals with events of 605 but chapter 26 goes back to 608-606. Then chapter 27 goes to 593 while 28 goes back a year to 594. Chapter 29 goes back farther to 597 and 32 jumps forward to 587. Chapter 36 goes all the way to 605 and 37 jumps down to 587. Why is this so? If we never know why, we do know that that is how it is. *This means you have to be prepared to meet oracles which are earlier or later than the one you just looked at.* And when you remember that the originals weren't given chapter numbers, this make it even more difficult for western readers!

Ezekiel received the vision of chapter 32 two months after he

received the message of 33. Chapter 29 is an earlier vision than chapter 26. The vision given in chapter 29:1-16 is dated 587 and verses 17-21 are dated 570. Why do we have 17 years between two verses? And why haven't the oracles come to us laid out in chronological sequence? It would be foolish to believe they were "just thrown together" but those who by the providence of God gathered together the inspired oracles didn't ask us how we'd like them.

Isaiah's record shows a disregard for *strict* chronology. Chapters 1-5 are *later* than chapter 6! Chapters 36-37 are *later* than chapters 38-39! Chapter 20 was received in 711 but chapter 28:1-8 (or maybe 13) was received prior to 722. This is enough to illustrate to you (and perhaps to bore you) the fact that we need to *stop* instinctively expecting chronological development and to *begin* to expect the possibility of independent oracles being placed side by side independent of their dates!

All this being true (and it's more prevalent than I've shown it to be), we should be slow to assume that all of the material in 40-66 is one sequential block. We should be slow to dismiss the notion that Isaiah deals at times with past deportations (by Assyrians and others). We should be slow to dismiss the notion that Isaiah deals at times with hope of *rescue from* Assyrian (and other) exiles for Israel (Ephraim) as well as Judah. We should be slow to dismiss the notion that some of the descriptions of national wickedness might well be oracles relating to the days of Ahaz or Jotham or Manasseh and which are incorporated in 40-66.

Furthermore, the impression is left that the notion of Babylonian captivity and rescue from it isn't really a part of an 8th century viewpoint. That that theme is really the province of Isaiah II, III or IV. But this just isn't so.

Micah 4:10 explicitly mentions the Babylonian captivity and the Lord rescuing them from it!

Isaiah in 13 – 14 speaks of Israel's *future return* from Babylon before they are even in it (14:1-4)!

And he speaks of Babylon as having been the world's leading nation even before she becomes the world's leading nation (14:4,16,17 et al)!

And he speaks of how rescued Israel will speak *after the exile* in Babylon before they have even *begun* it (14:4ff)!

And he speaks of Babylon's fall (ultimately) at the hands of the Medes (rather than the Persians, which surely ought to say something about the early date of the oracle since with the career of Cyrus the Persians became the dominant element in the alliance which broke Babylon). See 14:17.

In chapter 21 he speaks again of Babylon's fall (21:9). (see the comments on 21:2.) And in 21:5 God calls on *warriors of the future* to get on with the job of destroying Babylon. (*Is speaking to people of the future as though they were present unprecedented then?*)

And you will have noticed that the oracle against Babylon in 13 – 14 was received by “the son of Amoz” (13:1).

In the main, the oracles against Babylon in 13,14 and 21 are the usual predictive style of a prophet. What if, having laid all this predictive groundwork (predictive in the *usual* style), what if the prophet then spoke of it (when he does speak of it in 40-66) in present tenses and perfects? Should it bruise our sensitivities that badly?

In 39:6-7 the son of Amoz *predicts* the rape of the royal house and the nation by Babylon. In 14:1-3 the son of Amoz assumes it. In 14:4ff the son of Amoz predicts how Israeli exiles will rejoice over Babylon. Isn't it perfectly possible that *when* the son of Amoz deals with Babylon's fall in 40-66 that he might speak of it as *accomplished*?!

Now back to another reason why I think Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote the whole book.

6. *I believe Isaiah, the son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because the flagrant idolatry mentioned in 40-66 didn't occur during or after the exile.*

Archer (BD, page 265) develops this a little. Harrison (IOT, page 792) denies that a Deutero-Isaiah would be preoccupied with “idolatry current in pre-Exilic Canaan” (as Isaiah 40-66 is at times) “for above everything else,” he continues, “the experience

of the exile had made Baalism a completely dead issue.” (Willis’ contrary view lacks solid evidence.)

7. I believe Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote the whole book because a Deutero-Isaiah is not known by Jeremiah or Ezekiel or the nation.

Everyone who is able to appreciate the theological power and the literary magnificence of 40-66 is on record as saying it is the pinnacle of OT prophecy. If 40-66 was the work of an “Isaiah” other than the son of Amoz, he would undoubtedly have been known to the nation by name. Instead, we have this “great unknown’s” unparalleled work attached to the work of an “inferior” prophet who lived over one hundred years before him.

Had there been such a glorious prophet prophesying during the exile (say around 570/560 when Cyrus was beginning to rise) and delivering such unparalleled oracles, do you think the nation wouldn’t know his name? Do you think his oracles would become attached to an “inferior” prophet of over one hundred years before? Do you think that would happen without the Jewish nation knowing it? (And the Jews never knew of a “second Isaiah.”)

And had there been such a glorious prophet prophesying to the exiles at that time, would he have been unknown to Jeremiah and Ezekiel? When God called Ezekiel to speak to the nation (2:5) he wanted them to “know that there hath been a prophet among them.”

8. I believe that Isaiah, son of Amoz, wrote the whole book because there are too many indications in 40-66 that it is written in Canaan rather than in the flatlands of Babylon.

Willis (*Isaiah*, page 28), Archer (BD, page 265 and SOTI, pages 338,9) and numerous others, cite clear indicators that 40-66 was composed in Palestine. The physical lay-out, mountains, trees, towns etc., which are Palestinian are mentioned.

In Conclusion:

It must be said that it is characteristic of those who advocate a multiple author view to hold a low view of biblical inspiration. The bulk of them flatly deny predictive prophecy (though many recent writers argue more from a “historical setting” perspective than from such a denial). An unbiblical view of the Bible’s inspiration is too serious a deviation from (what I understand to be) biblical truth for us to take it lightly or treat it as a casual affair. Time must be spent, by those competent in the area, strongly refuting such a view.

But if a man holds to full biblical inspiration and thoroughly accepts that all of Isaiah is the pure word of God, it matters little to me if he believes that more than one prophet of God produced “Isaiah.”

And it is possible for one who holds to the full inspiration of the Bible (all 66 chapters of Isaiah in particular) to believe that “Isaiah” is the product of more than one prophet of God. I have met such people! I believe they are in ignorance! That I can “accuse” them of. But to impute to them a denial of what they affirm isn’t upright. If a man is firmly committed to predictive prophecy and doesn’t agree that some passage I may call predictive is predictive, that doesn’t make him a transgressor against predictive prophecy. It means we differ as to how that passage is to be understood.

Let’s not only be careful with our accusations, let’s be honorable in them.

In the final analysis the issue is twofold:

1. Do you believe the Bible is the fully inspired and pure word of God?
2. Do you purpose to live by it?

KINGS OF ISRAEL

1. *Jehoash* (798-782)

He was a militarily powerful king who ruled Israel for 16 years (2 Kings 13:10-11) while still promoting the calf-worship of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. He engaged in civil war against

Amaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 14). He captured the Judean ruler, destroyed one of the fortifying walls of Jerusalem, took hostages and rifled both the temple and royal palace of all treasure. See *Amaziah* (king of Judah).

2. *Jeroboam II* (793-753)

Son of Jehoash. The prophet Jonah assured him of success against the enemies of Israel (see 2 Kgs. 13:3-4). Jeroboam restored the whole northern Solomonic territory. The prosperity of the nation didn't reach to the poor. The rich exploited them and slavery was rampant. Read Hosea and Amos for a graphic picture of the wickednesses of the day. Calf-worship was the central idolatry even though all kinds were practiced. Priests and prophets engaged in drunken revelry and robbery, murder, self-indulgence were the order of the day. The good that God sought to do them out of pity for their oppressed condition was prostituted and they turned to thank their *idols* for the benefits.

So God sent calamities on them to get their attention. Drought, famine, locusts, earthquake and plague (see Amos 4:6-11). Then, later, the ultimate scourge, Assyria. See Hosea 9:3. Jonah had proclaimed repentance to Nineveh and she was spared. Her repentance was short-lived and she became the brutal scourge with which God punished Israel and Judah. (It isn't hard to understand Jonah's pouting with God or Josiah's opposition to Necho's support of tottering Assyria.)

3. *Menahem* (752-742)

When Jeroboam II died, his son, Zechariah reigned for six months before being assassinated by Shallum who then reigned one month before being assassinated by Menahem. Menahem established himself firmly on the throne by a show of brutal strength. See 2 Kings 15.

During his reign, Pul (Tiglathpileser) came against Israel and took away many of the Israelites from the east bank of Jordan (1 Chron. 5:26). He also placed heavy tribute on Menahem (2 Kgs. 15:13-22). Menahem was glad to have Assyrian support since he had usurped the throne. And, besides he knew how to raise the needed money.

4. *Pekahiah* (742-740)

Son of Menahem. He was yet another who promoted the heretical calf-worship of Jeroboam. He was slain by Pekah (who, following, Thiele) was a rival ruler in Gilead.

5. *Pekah* (752-732)

Thiele holds that Pekah set up a rival claim to the throne in Israel at Gilead and from there ruled a part of Israel while Menahem ruled in Samaria. This might well explain Hosea 5:5 which differentiates (it seems) between Israel and Ephraim. It would also give added significance to Menahem's paying Pul "to confirm the kingdom in his hand" (2 Kgs. 15:19). This view of Thiele's is accepted by Gleason Archer (*Inerrancy*, 69-71) as correct even though Archer critiques Thiele on other issues.

The threat of Assyrian invasion leads Pekah to an alliance with (formerly hated and oppressive) Syria whose ruler was Rezin of Damascus. Together with Rezin, Pekah attempts to overthrow the house of David in Judah and put on the throne Ben Tabeel (see Isaiah 7 and 2 Chron. 28). This would have given them the added forces of Judah to stand against Assyria.

But though he and Rezin scored notable successes against Ahaz, they could not completely subjugate him. Pekah, intending to enslave the thousands of Judean captives he had taken, is warned against doing this by a prophet of God. Leading men in the army took heed to the prophetic warning and restored the captives to Judah. Assyria is moving on Israel and Pekah is now regarded as a liability. A conspiracy leads to his assassination and Hoshea (who immediately submits to Assyria) becomes ruler over Israel.

6. *Hoshea* (732-723/2)

In the Nimrod Tablet, Hoshea is mentioned as paying tribute to the Assyrian who had "set (him) over them." What Hoshea now ruled as the kingdom of Israel was an utter fraction of what it had been under Jeroboam. The whole area was increasingly "gentilized" (see Isaiah 9:1).

Hoshea was obedient to the Assyrians until the death of Pul.

Egypt, as was customary for her, urged rebellion and Hoshea came over to So, pharaoh of Egypt (identified by Velikovsky as Sosenk or Shoshenk of the Libyan dynasty, see AIC, 174-176). Shalmaneser V laid siege to Samaria for three years, took it, ended the kingdom of Israel and continued Pul's policy of moving locals into exile and strangers into the local areas.

KINGS OF JUDAH

1. *Amaziah* (798-782)

This was the son of Joash, the ingrate who slew Zechariah the son of Jehoida who had done so much for Joash. See Chron. 24. For this base ingratitude God judged him and his servants slew him. Amaziah reigned in his place.

Amaziah was a decent man with the flaws of decent men. See 2 Chron. 25 and 2 Kings 14. When he was established on the throne he avenged himself against the killers of his father but at least he didn't take it out on their children.

He plans an expedition against Edom and raised an army in Judah of about 300,000. He also hired 100,000 Israelites. A prophet warned him against hiring the Israelites so he dismissed them. The Israelites in fury killed about 3,000 Judeans and took much spoil.

Amaziah fiercely subdued Edom but began to worship their gods (2 Chron. 25:14-16) and for this God punished the nation. Amaziah challenged Joash to battle and, in the end, Judah was terribly beaten. Amaziah was taken (and at that time, claims Thiele, Judah made Uzziah co-regent with his father), and many hostages, all the treasure from the royal palace and the temple were confiscated and one of the fortifying walls of Jerusalem was dismantled.

Amaziah proceeds in wickedness away from God and a conspiracy rises against him in Jerusalem. He flees to Lachish (the town of horses) but he is pursued there and killed. He is brought back to Jerusalem on horses (no doubt with much pomp and ceremony) and buried there.

2. *Azariah/Uzziah* (792-740)

Co-regent with his father for ten years and, in all, ruled 52 years. He was a righteous man who took his relationship with God seriously indeed. See 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chron. 26.

The career of Uzziah (Azariah) well illustrated his double name. Uzziah (Jehovah my Strength) and Azariah (Jehovah my Help) summarize it well. The chronicler seems to have that in mind when he says of Azariah that “God helped him” (2 Chron.26:7), he “was marvelously helped” (26:13,15). He “waxed exceeding strong” (26:8,15). He was militarily successful to a very marked degree. (Be sure to see these sources.) And this would help explain, along with his righteousness, how it was that Isaiah began to believe in God and the king rather than God as King (see the comments on chapter 6).

The nation prospered economically though, it’s true, the poor experienced little of the prosperity. Agriculture was promoted to a marked degree. Art was encouraged. Under Uzziah, the Judean nation was stronger and more prosperous than at any time since the kingdom of Israel had split in the days of Rehoboam.

(It seems more than difficult, then, in light of the Bible’s description of things under Uzziah, to believe that the “Azriau of Yaudi” subjugated by Tiglathpileser, and mentioned in the Assyrian Annals, is the Azariah of this period. Wiseman, in DOTT, 56, admits that the name occurs only in very broken passages. Pul’s success against this (Az)riau and the Bible record of Azariah don’t jell.)

The one recorded blot on Uzziah’s otherwise clean record is that of pride and presumption. We are told he attempted to offer up incense in the temple. The priests opposed him and the Lord smote him with leprosy which broke out on his forehead.

Zechariah 14:5 says: “Yea, ye shall flee, like as when you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah.” The vivid memory of that earthquake stayed with the nation for over two centuries. Amos 1:1 just flatly calls it “the earthquake”! Josephus (Ant. 10:9.4) claims that it occurred just at the time when Uzziah was arguing with the priests in the holy place. The earthquake hit, the foundation of the temple moved, the roof split

and light poured in to the darkened recesses of the temple. Square on the forehead it hit him and leprosy broke out. Maybe that's all a little too dramatic but that kind of thing has happened before in Scripture. From that time until he died, Uzziah lived apart from others and his son, Jotham, was co-regent with him for about ten years.

3. *Jotham (750-732)*

Co-regency, which was common in Israel and Judah, was to be openly expected since Uzziah was now a leper. Jotham was also a righteous king and he made a point, says the chronicler, of avoiding a lapse similar to his father's. He too was successful in war and the land continued to prosper. And the people, we are told (2 Chron. 27:2) "did yet corruptly."

It was around the close of his reign ("in those days" that the Lord "began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah" (2 Kings 15:37). There is no indication, however, of any real confrontation between them in the days of Jotham. No doubt, with the pressure rising from Assyria, the Israelites and the Syrians were urging Jotham into an alliance. And it's equally certain that he would have nothing to do with it.

4. *Ahaz (735-715)*

Ahaz's reign overlapped his father's by several years. Uzziah and Jotham had been righteous even though the people were corrupt. But in Ahaz, a corrupt people were led by a weak and very corrupt leader.

Under Assyrian threat, Rezin and Pekah attempted to have Judah ally with them. Judah refused and the Syrians and Israelites fought against Judah. In battle against Pekah, Judah lost 120,000 in one day. 200,000 were taken captive by Israel but were returned when a prophet of God got the attention of the leading men and warriors (see 2 Kings 18). The Syrians attacked and gained Elath which had been taken by Uzziah. And Judean captives poured into Damascus as Rezin made havoc in Judea. But, for all that, Ahaz hung on grimly. And Edom chewed on him too.

Isaiah (see chapters 7-8) comes to Ahaz with assurances from

Jehovah. These assurances would be underscored by a sign from Jehovah. Any sign which Ahaz would like to have. Ahaz will have none of it because he prefers the solid ranks of Assyrian troops to the word of an invisible God.

Ahaz calls on Assyria, pays them handsomely. Assyria destroys the Syrian enemy and calls his vassals to meet him at Damascus. At Damascus Ahaz sees the pagan altars (2 Kings 16 and 2 Chron. 28:23) and makes models of the gods he thought had beaten him. Idolatry of all kinds came into Judah like the rushing tide. He meddled in the temple ritual, perverted the priests, closed temple activities down and, in general and in specific, pursued spiritual and moral roguery. His idols, far from doing him good, “were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.” In every city of Judah, what had been going on against the wishes of the former kings, now had royal sanction and promotion. There were idolatrous shrines erected everywhere. It could hardly get worse . . . but it did.

5. *Hezekiah* (715-686)

There is much debate over the year Hezekiah acceded to the throne. We’re following the dating of Thiele while recognizing that there are difficulties involved. Hezekiah was a thoroughly good man with an ample supply of faults.

He instituted a religious reform and removed all the shrines built by his father. The effects of his reform were widespread but they didn’t go at all deep. See 2 Chron. 29-32 and 2 Kings 18-19. When his son, Manasseh, began to have influence, the pent up wickedness which was in the nation, from top to bottom, poured out, and the land became one giant open sewer.

Hezekiah inherited Assyria from his father Ahaz and he continued faithful to the Assyrians until things appeared to him to warrant revolt. Babylon, in the person of Merodach-baladan, was a thorn in the side of the Assyrians. Putting him down was a lot tougher than the Assyrians wished it to be. Hezekiah had suffered what could have been a fatal illness but by the grace of God he recovered. Merodach-baladan sent an ambassador to enquire after his health and to say how pleased they were at his recovery. Hezekiah was pleased and showed off the treasures of the city (see

Isaiah 39 and 2 Chron. 32:27-31). This linked him with an anti-Assyrian element. At the death of Sargon II there was a revolt by the smaller nations against Assyria and Hezekiah, at Egyptian prodding, joined it. The word of Isaiah to the king was rejected.

It was well known that Hezekiah had been super-abundantly blessed (2 Chron. 32:27-31) and Assyria wanted all of it they could get. And it was just as important that no kingdom be allowed to rebel without being ruthlessly punished. Hezekiah had attempted to buy the Assyrian off (2 Kings 18:13-16). Sennacherib had taken the money but was still prepared to level Jerusalem.

In desperation Hezekiah turns to God (2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37). In one night, without anyone's help, Jehovah destroys 185,000 Assyrian troops. Sennacherib departs (and is later assassinated by two of his sons).

So Hezekiah dies with the city of Jerusalem still intact and defended by God for his servant David's sake (Isa. 37:38). The ruin that was to come, in part, due to the pride and arrogance of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:27-31), would come to Jerusalem after Hezekiah's death and *not* at the hands of the Assyrian (Isa. 39).

6. *Manasseh* (697-642)

Sennacherib, in his approach to assaulting Jerusalem, had destroyed the fortified cities of Judah and took away about 200,000 captives. Despite the signal demonstration of God's might, Judah remained under the Assyrian dominance. Manasseh pays tribute to Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib. But Manasseh doesn't submit to God as he submits to Assyria.

Under Manasseh, Judah becomes more wicked than under any king before him or since. *You need to read 2 Kings 21*. Idolatry of every kind floods the land. Sorcery and witchcraft prevail. The murder of innocents becomes so widespread that we're told he filled Jerusalem "from one end to the other."

Religion was at an all-time high and morality and spirituality were at an all-time low. God assures the nation that nothing can keep Judah from going into captivity (2 Kgs. 21:12-15; 23:26-27).

Tradition has it that Isaiah suffered martyrdom under Manasseh. It was said that he died, being sawn asunder (Hebrews

11:37?). Perhaps not. But Isaiah did write (2 Chron. 32:32) about the life of Hezekiah and Thiele insists that Manasseh was coregent with Hezekiah for eleven or twelve years (would that fit in with illness suffered by Hezekiah?). If this is allowed as correct, then it just might be that Isaiah saw the growing influence of the wicked young Manasseh being manifested in the nation (Isa. 56:9-57:10). *Be sure to read 2 Chron. 33:10; 2 Kings 21:10.*

Manasseh, as the Assyrian records show, paid tribute to Esarhaddon. But, Egypt continually fomented rebellion against Assyria and Manasseh may have gotten himself involved in one of them. At any rate the Assyrians took him as a hostage (2 Chron. 33:11). He repented of his wickedness against Jehovah and was restored to Judah (a friendly face for the Assyrians in that area?). He tried to change things in a land stinking to heaven but while he was able to take the idols out of the land, he wasn't able to take wickedness and idolatry out of the people's hearts. His son Amon (the only Egyptian name among the Judean kings) was a reject. His reign has been described as "a miserable annex to that of his father."

Josiah's attempt to turn the nation around was much too little, much too late and much too superficial. Ezekiel and Jeremiah give us a clear picture of the hearts and the conduct of the people of that time. And according to the word of God, Babylon came and Judah was devastated. The nation suffered "the purgatory of national collapse and exile" (Bruce).

WHO REIGNED WHEN?

<u>Judean kings</u>	<u>Israelite kings</u>	<u>Assyrian kings</u>
Ahaziah: 796-767	Jehoash: 798-782	Tiglathpileser: 745-726
Uzzah: 792-767	Jeroboam II: 793-753	Shalmaneser V: 726-722
Jotham: 750-735	Menahem: 752-742	Sargon II: 722-705
Ahaz: 735-715	Pekan: 752-732	Sennacherib: 705-681
Hezekiah: 715-686	Hoshea: 732-723/2	Esarhaddon: 681-669
Manasseh: 697-642		Ashurbanipal: 669-627

THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

Under Jeroboam II and Uzziah of Judah, the nation of Israel had gained territorial advantage that rivaled the kingdom of Solomon. If only they had been righteous, said God (Isaiah 48:18), then her peace would have been like a river and her righteousness as the waves of the sea. That would have ensured the *real* prosperity of the people. But Israel was a sick nation.

Amos raged against the northern kingdom and it is only necessary for you to read that book in a modern speech version to get the feel of how vileness had gripped the populace. Hosea, the prophet of the love of God, perhaps more than any other prophet, paints the moral stench in Israel with the blackest of blacks, the “reddest” of reds. Luxury loving, immoral, unjust, drunken revelers, exploiters of the poor and idolatrous. That’s how they are painted. God answered all that by using Assyria as a rod of correction. He buried the Israelite kingdom for ever.

Isaiah and Micah give us a description of wicked Judah. It is tempting to think that things couldn’t have been so bad in Judah when they had four kings such as Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah. But this only illustrates well the truth of Ezekiel 14:12-20. A handful of righteous individuals isn’t enough to preserve a nation whose heart is rotten.

In the righteous reigns of Uzziah and Jotham we are still told (2 Chron. 27:2) “the people did yet corruptly.” And (2 Kings 15:4,35) “howbeit the high places were not taken away.” A corrupt nation, kept alive only by the righteousness of a handful, can only be kept alive so long. With Ahaz (2 Kings 16) corruption became the norm. Child sacrifice, eagerness to try the new gods allied with a veneer of piety (Isa. 7:12).

Sacrifices burned to Jehovah were never more numerous than in the days of Judean prosperity. Desertion from God was rarely more obvious than during the trying days for Judah. “Going to church” was fashionable (Isa. 1:12). The prophets, priests and princes built Jerusalem on the blood of the innocent (Mic. 3:9-11) and still they “lean upon Jehovah, and say, ‘Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?’”

They were smug and self-righteous and contemptuous and perverts, The prophets irritated them. “What does he want?” they scream in fury (Mic. 6:6ff), “rivers of oil? and thousands of rams? Does he want me to sacrifice my children to him?” And the prophet reminds them that God has already made himself clear on that score. What Jehovah wanted and wasn’t getting, was for them to do justly, love kindness and to walk humbly with him.

At no time under *any* of the kings from Uzziah on down was Judah faithful to God. At various times they were worse than others. Under Ahaz things were worse than under Uzziah and Jotham. Under Hezekiah things were better than under Ahaz. Under Manasseh (and Amon) things were worse than they had ever been (see Kings and Chronicles for information on Manasseh). *All of this Isaiah would have seen.*

Manasseh genuinely repented and was restored to the land of Judah (this is the background to Ezekiel 18). He tried to change things but it was a hopeless task. Outer conformity only masked the cancered heart of a nation with total gangrene in every part.

Josiah worked hard at reformation but Ezekiel describes the people of Judah as those who had taken their idols into their hearts. A reading of Ezekiel 8-11 (and elsewhere) will give you a good picture. A reading of Jeremiah (in modern speech) will give you a full picture.

The whole nation of Israel begged for, pleaded for, demanded –judgment! And God gave it to them!

THEMES IN ISALAH

God and History

Over and over again Isaiah teaches us that God controls history. It is one of the manifestations of his power. We see it especially in places like chapter 45 where Cyrus becomes the anointed of God to do his will in regard to Israel (which in turn affects all nations). The idols have no power to shape history, the present or the future. And they can call on no prediction of theirs in the past which can be seen as fulfilled. They're impotent. See 41:21-24 & 44:6-20.

But God isn't simply *powerful* (as his control of history shows), he is *righteous* in his control of it. His power isn't that of, say, a Hitler or an Ashurbanipal. He labors in history to bring about blessing for all nations (see the brief remarks on the function of Israel as a servant to the nations) and only punishes a nation when they give him no alternative. There is no conflict of *attributes* within God but because he deals with a world full of sinners, of people who oppress one another, he often experiences a conflict of interests. He would wish to bless everyone but by their choosing they make it impossible. And so the oppressors must be punished that blessing might be obtainable for the oppressed.

But while God punishes, he is never vindictive, it is never punishment for punishing's sake nor is there "overkill" in the punishment meted out (see 28:23-29) which assures us that God suits the chastisement to the needs of each case in a judicious manner so as to produce the best possible results.

His righteousness is shown in his *impartiality*. He will punish disobedient Israel (10:5ff) when they insist on being punished. He will take into account the evil motives of Assyria as it unconsciously goes about to do God's will (10:5ff). He will judge all the nations which interfere with his purposes in the world (chapters 13-24) which includes, of course, his intention to bless even those nations which frustrate his kind purposes for them (see the principle taught in Jeremiah 18:1-12).

All of this assumes that God's control of the world is *not* such

that every active desire of his is fulfilled. That is, God controls the world, but that control allows people to make choices which frustrate God's redemptive intentions toward them. The God of Augustine may be able to secure every single thing that it is his wish to secure, but that isn't the God of the Bible.

Jeremiah 18:1-12 makes that very clear. And Isaiah (48:18) assures us that God wished Israel to enjoy a state or degree of blessedness which, in their rebellion, they missed. Throughout the book we find God "making the best out of a bad job" which Israel is doing as his servant.

God's control of history allows for man's evil choices. He can turn man's evil choices to fruitful ends which relate to his immutable counsel but the nations are permitted to choose and lose in their choosing. The purpose of God to bless mankind is fulfilled but in the process many "thrust it from them and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life."

We must acknowledge that God finally punishes nations and they die in their wickedness. But we must not conclude that their dying in their wickedness is "according to the good pleasure" of God. He has plainly declared that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 30-33) and, indeed, he calls all men, everywhere, to call on him and be saved (45:22).

To understand God's control of history so as to make him actively responsible for every event and decision of man is to lay an awful responsibility at his feet. To make him responsible for "whatsoever comes to pass" is to make him actively responsible for all sin and condemnation. We must not take God's omnipotence and understand it as obliterating man's ability to choose what is contrary to God's stated wish. When people chose wickedness they do what God expressly says he doesn't want them to do. Isaiah's understanding of history's development makes it clear that he makes *man* responsible for man's sin. His understanding of history makes it clear that God is able to make use of sinful man's choices to bring redemption to people.

The Holiness of God

Over and over and over again Isaiah will speak of God as the “Holy One of Israel.” In his inaugural vision he hears the seraphim call God three times holy. What is holiness in God? It helps us only a little to say that it means he is “separate” from men. That’s true, but what does that mean? God is separate from sinners by virtue of his almighty power and inexhaustible wisdom, and the like. But that’s not what holiness conjures up for us. Whatever else we say about God’s holiness it always (and rightly) deals with God’s opposition to sin! In his holiness God is not only personally free from sin, he pursues separation from sin for man and by man. His holiness means *he* is free from it and it means he wants man to be free from it too.

I’m one of those, right or wrong, who believes that God’s holiness is an aspect of God’s love. God loves the sinner and cannot help wanting the beloved sinner to be rid of sin. He “cannot help” wanting the sinner to be rid of sin *because* he loves the sinner. Holiness in God doesn’t stand over against love, it is one aspect of his love.

Love can never be indifferent to sin any more than it can be indifferent to seeking the welfare of the beloved. That’s because loving is seeking the benefit of the beloved. And that’s why love must chastise, prune, discipline and the like. “As many as I love,” said God (Rev. 3:19), “I reprove and chasten.” Exodus 34:6-7 puts punishment of sin right in a context of God’s love for people.

Lewis is right, one may love another *in spite* of his evil temper, grubbiness and slovenly ways, but we don’t love others *because* of these things. We may insist on loving someone like this in spite of these things but *because* we love them we cannot keep from wanting these things removed. Love stands opposed to all evil for it is the very nature of love that it “works no ill to his neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). Love is seeking another’s highest good *therefore* love will unendingly seek the destruction of ill behavior. The Romans 13:10 passage expresses love’s response in the negative but of course it is much more than that (see 13:8-10).

Part of the reason Isaiah lays such stress on God’s holiness is

because he lays such stress on the elected (chosen) status of Israel.

God had made it clear, right from the beginning (Deut. 7:6-8), that his election of Israel was not because of Israel's goodness. It was because of love – for them and for their fathers – that he chose them. It would appear that Israel began to view themselves not only as *elect* but as *elite*. They had their moments when they viewed themselves as first rate citizens. Perhaps the initial election of them wasn't because of their goodness, but hadn't they shown God how lucky he was to have chosen such a marvelous people?

On the other hand, there are clear indications that they felt God was “stuck” with them. If the election of the nation was not on the basis of their goodness (Deut. 7:6-8) then what's the big deal about their not being good? If he elected them to begin with while they weren't good, what difference does it make if they continue to live up to his first impressions of them?

Isaiah's stress on God's holiness is a word from Israel's Lover that he will not just sit by while they wallow in filth. He loves them too much for that.

And, it is a rebuke of Israel's open rebellion against (see the discussion of Israel's spiritual climate in Isaiah's day) God who loves them. It is a rebuke of their self-satisfied response in the worship of God when they offer him ritual and demand: “What else does he want?” (Mic. 6:6-8).

And, it is a rebuke to their elitist notions. Israel is to be God's servant to bring light to the foreigners that they too may enjoy life with God. Israel, by its wickedness was hiding the light under a bushel and refusing to fulfill the divine purpose. Because of his love for the Gentiles Jehovah confronts the iniquity of Israel.

The Remnant

Isaiah will make use of the remnant theme more than any other prophet but the *remnant* notion didn't begin with Isaiah. It permeates the OT from God's gracious choice of Noah through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, down through the crisis in Israel in Elijah's day and on down to the establishment of the “new Israel” as the Church of Christ. (By “new Israel” I mean Jews who by

faith in Jesus Christ entered into a new covenant with God. See Hebrews 8:6ff.)

Isaiah will use the remnant theme to speak of 1) physical survivors from some judgment or other, and, 2) spiritual survivors of the national apostasy.

And it isn't always easy (if ever easy), when dealing with Israel, to distinguish between those two categories. The reason is, they are both intimately involved with each other. It isn't hard to see that 10:19 speaks of a physical remnant of Assyrian people but we can't say with confidence that 1:9 speaks of the physical survivors of an Assyrian purge rather than a spiritual remnant whose very presence ensures the continued existence of the national entity.

It's clear that 30:17 speaks of a remnant from a physical calamity (though the word doesn't occur there) and it seems safe to say that the remnant of 10:20-22 *must include* the idea of physical survivors of the Assyrian crises (note especially v. 20). But there is also in the section the note of faithfulness on the part of the remnant. They are spoken of as more than survivors in a physical sense, they are a remnant which clings to God.

The nation is decimated and (comparatively) only a remnant of it survives. But within that physically surviving remnant there are those who cling to God. The difficulty wouldn't exist if all those who physically survived the Assyrian crises were spiritually in tune with God, but they weren't! The lamentable careers of Manasseh and Amon followed the 701 crisis so we know that all who physically survived the Assyrian inroads weren't faithful to God.

The 10:20-23 section makes the point that the decimation of the nation is according to justice. As a whole, the nation is disloyal to God. Their punishment is not at all surprising. This judgment would result in a remnant of the nation being preserved (physically). The judgment of God is to be decisive and thorough. They can be sure that even if the nation is numbered in multiplied millions, God's judgment will cut off the bulk of the nation (22-23).

But, I need to say again, the passage does speak of the righ-

teousness of the remnant and therefore cannot simply be equated with the number of physical survivors. And Paul's use of this passage in Romans 9:23-29 (though it isn't decisive in determining its thrust in Isaiah 10) leads me to believe that Isaiah 10 does indeed have the spiritual remnant in view (without excluding the physical survivors idea). In that section, Paul is dealing with the awful reality that the bulk of Jews are outside of God's blessings in the Messiah despite the fact that they had been *nationally* elected (see the comments on *election*). He tells his opponents that his doctrine of a spiritual remnant, a saved remnant, is not new news. It is as old as Isaiah. The existence of a small number of Jews in a blessed state shouldn't surprise them, this was the message of Isaiah 10. And he gives as the reason for that state of affairs what Isaiah in 10:23 gives – God's just punishment (see Romans 9:27ff).

If what I'm offering is correct, the righteous remnant lead to the preservation of the nation as a nation (though in a decimated condition). Had there been no righteous remnant, none who came to believe in God (whether through the process of judgment or otherwise) there would have been a total obliteration of the national entity. I judge that this is what Isaiah 1:9 speaks of.

The context there, also, is the Assyrian crisis. Had it not been for the elect, the righteous remnant, the nation would have been totally exterminated as were Sodom and Gomorrah. The band of physical survivors was the nation in remnant form but that remnant existence was the result of the righteous ones whom God had kept unto himself (see Romans 9:29 & 11:2-5).

I can understand why some would think that parts of what I've written here are misleading. But that's where I am at present.

So, Isaiah uses the remnant theme to speak of physical survivors of national judgments and also of spiritual survivors of evil days. The spiritual survivors "guarantee" the existence of the national body (even though it is in a "pared-down" condition).

But the remnant notion is also used in two other ways. 1) The prophet wishes to underline the grave condition into which the nation has come. 2) He wishes to express the faithfulness of God to his commitment to the nation.

We've already touched on these in passing so let me say only a very little about them. Regarding the first, the very fact that only a remnant ("a very small remnant" – 1:9) is permitted to survive tells the nation of the depths of its apostasy and the necessity of thorough judgment. Their national existence hangs, as it were, on a thread (numerically speaking). Only a remnant stands between them and obliteration.

Regarding number 2. God had made a commitment to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. He later nationalized the seed of Abraham through Jacob at Sinai. An elect nation was born. Until God changed his mind about using the seed of Abraham through Jacob (now nationalized at Exodus 19 and following) the divine task remains with Israel. This task brought great advantages to the Jew (Rom. 3:1) if they would only partake of them. Not only did they not (characteristically) appropriate the advantages, they (characteristically) refused the task God gave them (i.e., to be his instrument of blessing and light to the world).

God could justly have rejected the seed of Abraham as his instrument of blessing, but he wouldn't. So he kept working with a stiff-necked people and "leaving for himself" (Rom. 11:4) a band of believers within the nation which would testify of his faithfulness to his promises to Abraham (and the world). The faithful ones were a "covenant to the people" (42:6; 49:5,8 – see the brief comments on *election & the Servant*). They were God's word that he wasn't through with the nation despite their wickedness.

This righteous remnant which suffered *with* the people because of the wickedness *of* the people were the laughing stock of both Israel and the Gentiles. When the truth was perceived it was known that their suffering was essential for Israel's continued preservation and the Gentiles' enlightenment and salvation. See the comments on 49:6.

This notion of an Israel within Israel permeates the OT and Christ gives it his full approval in places like John 8. He insists that his hearers are Abraham's seed (8:37) and then denies that they are (8:39). He grants that they are of the house of Abraham

(8:33,37) but he also makes it clear that they are like Ishmael who was also Abraham's seed. They answered to Ishmael and not to Isaac who was the son who was to abide in the house forever if the Son made them "free" (that is, sons of faith like Isaac).

Paul makes much of this Israel within Israel truth in his discussion of (among other things) election in Romans 9-11. He insists that not all of Jacob's (Israel's) descendants are Israel (9:6) and that merely physical kinship with Abraham constitutes a person a "child" of Abraham (9:7). I've developed this whole theme at some length in the commentary on *Romans* and in *The Reign of God*. I think it is a very important strand of biblical teaching which has far-reaching consequence for biblical interpretation.

Peter makes use of Deuteronomy 18:15ff to make a distinction between Jew and Jew. The Jews who reject the coming prophet (Christ) would be cut off from among "the people." In using "the people," Peter maintains Jewish continuity and severs the unbelievers not from "the Church" (that is the NT community of believer but from "the people" (that is the Jewish people, Israel). The unbelievers retain their Jewishness, of course, but they aren't regarded as Israel. See Acts 3:22-26 and Revelation 2:9; 3:9 where John advances the same notion.

The Servant

The term "servant" is used by Isaiah of himself (20:3), of Eliakim (22:20) and of David (37:35). In the plural it is used of those who are obedient to God in contrast to the rebellious (65:8,9 et al).

It is used of the nation as a corporate whole (41:8; 45:4 and elsewhere) It is used of the righteous remnant within the nation (49:3,5,6) and of the Messiah himself (42:1-4; 52:13-53:12 and the NT use of these passages).

Its use as designating the whole nation is plain to see in numerous passages in Isaiah itself. In the NT record we have Mary (Luke 1:54) reflecting on Israel's *servant* status.

It's use as designating the "inner elect" or righteous remnant is

clear also in 49:3,5-6 where the servant is at the same time identified as Israel but spoken of as distinct from Israel. (This is a very important truth and we need to hold these two facts – identity and distinction – in healthy tension.) Paul in Acts 13:47 takes hold of Isaiah 49:6 and says this is God’s word to “us.” He isn’t speaking of Jesus, obviously enough, because he says “us.” He doesn’t have the whole Jewish nation in mind since he is addressing an unbelieving segment of the nation and makes remarks concerning the nation which he holds as distinct from “us.” He has in mind the “inner elect,” the faithful Jews, of which he and Barnabas are two.

Its use as designating the Messiah is (as far as I’m concerned) put beyond reasonable dispute by the NT use of Isaiah’s words. See, as a few examples, Matt. 12:17-21; Acts 8:32-35; Luke 22:37. Peter speaks of Christ as God’s servant in Acts 3:13; 4:30 (using the same word as the LXX does for servant). Christ himself speaks of his suffering, service and giving himself in the place of others (Matt. 16:21; 20:28). But it isn’t only individual texts from the NT which assure us that we rightly understand Jesus as Isaiah’s suffering servant. It’s the sheer coinciding of the whole life of Christ with the various aspects of the servant in Isaiah that caps it all off for us.

This far, we can be very confident. I’m not as confident about all that I’m about to say as about the foregoing but I still think we have good grounds for what follows. See what you think.

The prophet doesn’t stop to say: “When I say ‘servant’ here, I mean the nation. But when I use the term over there, I mean the righteous remnant or, in another place, the Messiah himself.” The fact that he doesn’t spell out who he has in mind, on occasions, leaves us wondering.

In the same section (for example, Isaiah 42) he will speak of the servant as a delight to God and an eager worker with/for God. And, yet, as blind and deaf to God’s appeals (see 1-4 and 18-20). He will speak of the servant as requiring and deserving punishment for his own sins and yet say he is suffering vicariously and innocently on behalf of others, bearing their *iniquities* (42:18-22 and 53:1-12). He will call the servant Israel and without a word of

explanation he will differentiate the servant from Israel (49:3,5,6). Why is this?

I believe part of the answer is that the prophet speaks of the servant from three different perspectives and *all three of them* under the heading of Israel. I believe the Messiah represents Israel (see this clearly in Daniel 7:13,14,22, 27). I believe he represents all mankind, of course, as he is made sin (a sin offering) for us. But in Isaiah, the Messiah stands as Israel's leading son, Israel's representative citizen.

I believe the same is true of the righteous remnant. The "inner elect" which are part and parcel of the national entity, moves within the nation to accomplish the divine purpose for which the nation was chosen. The prophet doesn't differentiate between the Messiah, the righteous remnant and the national entity on all occasions because they are bound up one with another.

Israel *the nation* was subjected to judgment not just because it sinned, but because in its sinning it refused to live up to the responsibility God gave it as his servant to bring light and salvation to the whole world. God's judgment on the nation helped to produce and refine the remnant and this results in blessing for the nations. Be sure to read 65:8 in this light.

In that sense Israel suffered on behalf of the nations. Israel was placed under judgment so that God's purpose to bring salvation to the Gentiles could be fulfilled. The Gentiles, on whom the light finally dawns, sees Israel, the beaten one as the source of saving truth (see 2:2-4 and John 4:23).

What is true of the nation as a whole (within the limits we've mentioned) is also true of the righteous remnant. They are Israel! Without them God's purpose to bring salvation to the nations wouldn't have been fulfilled. Israel's very existence as a nation was possible through the obedience of the "inner elect" (see 1:9 and 65:8). Without the leavening presence of the (righteous remnant) servant, the nation would have been utterly obliterated (1:9; 65:8) and the Messianic work of redemption would not have been accomplished.

But this meant that the (righteous remnant) servant must be fully identified with the nation and suffer accordingly. Israel

wouldn't accept that they were being kept alive by the faithfulness of the righteous remnant. When the judgments fell, the righteous felt the pain. Their wives were raped and their children butchered with the rest. These obedient ones bore the punishment the sins of the nation provoked because they identified with the nation. The Gentile judges would not discriminate between the righteous and the wicked so the innocent suffer for the guilty. And what the nations don't know is: the righteous remnant is suffering for them too.

What is true of the nation in that general sense and what is true of the righteous remnant (servant) in a more particular sense is true in an "altogether" way concerning the Messiah who also represents Israel or Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:16). While they suffered on behalf of others, his sufferings were directly and immediately atonal in nature. What their suffering did *in a sense* his did in the final sense.

I'll leave it at that lest I make it more obscure than it now is. This will help explain why I hold that although Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is fulfilled in Christ, the section does embrace the righteous remnant (servant) as well as the Christ. And, Israel the nation, by virtue of what I've said would be involved in a general way in the section.

What makes us afraid of such a view? For conservative evangelicals (of which I'm one) there is the fear that *including* others in passages such as chapter 53 will lead to the utter removal of Christ from the passages. Or, less radically, it will make the case for Christ being in the passages less compelling. Since they know that Christ really is in view in such sections they don't wish that truth to be jeopardized. This is a legitimate fear but I don't regard it as well founded.

I'm persuaded beyond debate that the Master is in view in passages like 42 and 53 but I'm also persuaded (not beyond debate) that they include others (see the comments above). Genesis 12:3 speaks of Abraham's seed. There's no doubt in my mind at all that Jesus is in view (Gal. 3:16) but I have little doubt indeed that the Jews as a whole are in view (John 4:23).

In Genesis 3:15 we have the seed of the woman. Though no

NT scriptures quotes that passage, I'm fully persuaded that it has Christ in view (see Revelation 12:1ff) in light of the development of salvation history. But I'm also persuaded that righteous people are in view in light of Paul's allusion to the passage in Romans 16:20.

I think it's generally maintained by conservative evangelicals that 2 Samuel 7:12ff has reference to Christ (see Heb. 1:5). Still, a reading of that section makes it clear that Solomon is also in mind (esp. 14). Eliakim in Isaiah 22:22 may also be typical of Christ (Rev.3:7). David certainly is.

And doesn't the history of Israel, in many ways, shadow forth the experience of the Messiah?! I'm thinking of Israel being newly born from Egypt and threatened by the Dragon (Egypt, Rahab, Psalm 89:10; Isa. 30:7; 51:9) and John's description of the Master in Rev. 12:1-5). Of Israel's 40 years discipline and Christ's 40 days of the same during which he makes appeal to Israel's time of trial in parallel with his own. I'm thinking of Matthew 2:15 which parallels Israel's coming out of Egypt with the Master's experience in infancy. I'm thinking of Luke 9:31 where we are told of Christ's "exodus" (see the Greek) which was to come. (And see Paul's use of Israelite history in 1 Cor. 10, noting especially v. 11.)

But this shouldn't surprise us! The OT is full of people and events and things which shadow forth the experience of the Master. I'm thinking of people like Melchizedek and David, events like the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and the setting up of the brass serpent, things like the Passover lamb and the veil of the tabernacle. In a limited way they all reflected the fullness of truth found in Christ. Should it surprise us that Israel's experience would (in a limited way, an imperfect way) reflect his glory and truth?

But there's something else that worries conservative evangelicals. To apply Isa. 53 *in any sense* to Israel or the righteous remnant seems to suggest some atonal significance to their suffering. I certainly wouldn't suggest any such thing! But the idea of vicarious suffering permeates the Bible. The notion of some suffering that others might benefit is not only all over the Bible, we see it in our everyday lives.

Mothers and fathers go without so that the children are fed and/or clothed and/or educated. Kidney transplants and other activity spell it out for us. Paul in Col. 1:24 specifically claims that he suffers on behalf of others. See too 2 Cor. 1:5ff and 12:15. *Of course* Paul's sufferings weren't propitiatory, *of course* they couldn't be taken as a ransom price. But the idea of someone suffering unjustly that others might benefit is no brand-new revelation.

That God in a sense put Israel to grief for the benefit of others is surely not hard to swallow. True they were being punished for their crimes (which is why Isa. 53 can't be vigorously applied to Israel), but the nations who put her to grief had no grounds for their rape of Israel (Isa. 10:5ff & 52:3-5), and, by the grace of God, the suffering of Israel contributed to the redemption of the nations which raped her.

What may be true of Israel in that general way is certainly true in a fuller and more vigorous way concerning the righteous remnant. Note that Paul takes 49:6 and applies it to an "us" (see the comments above on this). But v. 7 contains the very truths expressed in 52:15; 53:3 et al. And what is affirmed of the servant in 42:1,6 is repeated of the righteous remnant in 49:8, says to me that these passages, while they certainly speak in the fullest sense of the Messiah, speak of the "inner elect," the righteous remnant.

One thing is plain to me. One doesn't have to be a left-wing liberal to believe that sections like 52:13 – 53:12 embrace more than the Messiah. Perhaps such a belief is incorrect but it isn't incorrect as a result of a low view of biblical inspiration or Christ's atoning sacrifice. So, blast the view if you feel you have grounds to, but don't make it a sinister view arising out of sinister leanings.

Election

Election is another theme prominent in Isaiah. The word, rendered "elect" or "chosen" occurs twelve times in the book but the idea is everywhere. The word "called" occurs frequently as an equivalent to "chosen" or "elected." You have God calling

(choosing or electing) Abraham (51:2) and Cyrus (45:4). The prophet speaks of Israel as called (chosen, elected) on numerous occasions. See 43:1,7 and especially 48:12.

Over and over again God speaks of Israel as his “chosen.” See 41:8,9; 43:10,21; 44:1,2 and 65:15 as illustrations of this. This election theme of Isaiah is not new. It is illustrated in Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and all the way down to the “new Israel” (that is, Jewish believers in the Messiah with whom God made a new covenant – see Hebrews 8:6ff) in the NT record.

Isaiah’s stress on election relates to Israel. Included in that “Israel” election is the “remnant” connection (see the brief remarks on that topic) and the election of the Messiah. I’m of the opinion that Isaiah doesn’t always draw a distinction between the nation as a whole, the righteous remnant and the Messiah. See the brief comments on the Servant.

Moses had already made it clear (Deut. 4:37) that it was “Because he loved your forefathers, therefore he chose (elected) their seed after them.” Later (in 7:7,8) he repeats: “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number ... but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he sware unto your fathers.” And once more (10:15): “Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as at this day.” The tone of these texts is reflected clearly in Isaiah 41:8.

The choice of Israel *wasn't* a choice to eternal salvation. In choosing Israel, God gave them this distinct possibility. He gave them advantages (Rom. 3:1) but there was no guarantee of eternal salvation. In choosing Abraham and Israel we are not to suppose that they were predestined to eternal salvation and that Melchizedek (who was rejected while Abraham was chosen) and all other nations were destined eternal lostness. (J. Barton Payne’s piece on “election” in his *The Theology of the Older Testament* makes poor reading indeed. He explicitly takes the view that all the nations (non-Israelite) were consigned to lostness when God chose Israel. With his view there can be no lost Jew. Not one! And no saved non-Israelites. Not one! That’s sad doctrine and

erroneous to boot.)

No, the election of Abraham and Israel, while it offered the opportunity of eternal salvation, was to a place in God's salvation purpose. He and they were chosen to be his instruments to bring salvation to all nations (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4 & 28:14 where God explicitly states that this is his intention through Israel). The idea that in choosing Israel God reprobated all the other nations is utter nonsense. In choosing Israel he rejected all other nations *as the instrument of his blessing for the world*.

The blessing of the nations (Gentiles) is something Isaiah stresses also. But when that is spelled out it becomes clear that it is through Israel they are to be blessed. See this in such passages as 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1,4; 49:5-6. It is out of Zion that the word of the Lord goes bringing light to the Gentiles and it is to the Israelite Messiah the foreigners flock for blessing. But this involved *responsibility* for Israel and not just glory. That the Gentiles would come flocking to them for light would be to Israel's glory but it was to be the glory of a servant who faithfully carries out the God-given task to which the servant had been elected! Israel forgot this. Instead of elect, they thought *elite*.

Isaiah insists on Israel's election – she has been chosen and all the other nations have been passed by. But her election must not be mistaken for elitism. It *wasn't* because she was good or grand that she was chosen. And it certainly wasn't because all other nations meant nothing to God. He tells Israel explicitly what her commission is. Israel is to bring justice, light and salvation to the Gentiles (42:1,4; 49:5-6; 51:4 with 2:3).

The nation *as a whole* didn't cooperate with God in that divine purpose so God punishes the nation. But he doesn't back away from the choice he made of the nation. Within the nation, raised up by God is a "spiritual Israel" (Israelites who trusted in Jehovah) which cooperates with God. It is the "remnant" (see the comment on *Remnant*) *who are identified as Israel* (49:3ff) even though they are shown to be distinct from the nation as a corporate whole (49:5,6).

These elect ones not only have their place in Israel as physical members of Abraham's seed, they are God's elect at a deeper

level. They are the “real” Israel within Israel which would one day constitute a “new” Israel when the Messiah comes to enact a “new” covenant with an elect remnant (Heb. 8:6ff; Rom.11:5). (I’ve developed this issue at some length in my *Commentary on Romans* and in my little book *The Reign of God* if you can bear to read any more from me.)

These elect ones, since they are fully identified with the physical nation, being Abraham’s seed, are the ones who keep the nation as a national entity alive (see the comments on the Remnant, esp. the comments on 1:9; 22:20-22). They are “a covenant of the people” (42:6; 49:8). Were it not for their presence (which is by the grace of God), the nation would be utterly obliterated (see 1:9; 65:8).

As it is, their presence is the nation’s assurance that God hasn’t retracted his choice of the nation. And it is in the context of Babylonian captivity that the “chosen” theme is stressed. The presence of the “inner elect” is the assurance that God hasn’t given up on the nation but it means that the “inner elect” must suffer *with* the nation and *for* the nation. Though the “inner elect” are viewed by their fellows as being smitten by God for their transgressions, the truth is, the nation is being given an offer of continued grace through the suffering of the “inner elect” on their behalf. The “inner elect” are not suffering because of their *own* sins, they are bearing suffering because of the nation’s guilt. And the foreign nations regard the sufferer as just another poor fool whose god let him down. But when light comes to him he realizes that his God led him to suffer that the light might get to the Gentile. At this, nations and their kings put their hands to their mouths in amazement.

But while all this is true (and I presently judge it is), even the “inner elect” (the righteous remnant) didn’t accomplish all that God wished and needed done. Within the “inner elect” there is an elect One – the Messiah. What the righteous remnant did in general terms, the Messiah accomplishes in totality and fulness. F.F. Bruce (NT Development of OT Themes, p. 62) is right when he says: “When the crucial test came, the faithful remnant was reduced to one person, the Son of Man who entered death single-

handed and rose again as his people's representative." As the "inner elect" grew out of the elect nation, so the "chosen Individual" came out of the inner elect. Before God was through with Israel (as a national entity – not as the seed of Abraham) he gained from the nation what he was after, redemption for all men.

There is a very real sense in which the nation, the "inner elect" and the Messiah are all inextricably bound together. They are all of the seed of Abraham and have been commissioned with the task of bringing redemption to the world. Though the nation as a whole resists that task yet it was the womb which nurtured the remnant and the Messiah and its sufferings (under God's hands) contributed to the salvation of the world (see John 4:23). The remnant made their definite contribution to the world's redemption and they were the crucible in which the Messiah was formed. The Messiah brought to fulfillment what couldn't be accomplished by the nation or the remnant. But when the task is completed, it is still true to say: "Salvation is from the Jews." This, in part, explains some of the confusion which reigns when we discuss the knotty issue of the *Servant*.

A SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

1. *Chapter 1* presents the nation of Israel as thoroughly chastised by a God who wishes her to turn to him in repentance. She has begged for this chastisement and God has given it to her. She is presented as a nation which tries to please God by formal and external religion. She feels this ought to be enough for God but he assures her that nothing less than genuine repentance and purging will make matters right.

2. *Chapters 2-4* present Judah as it could, should and would be (2:1-4) in relation to the nations around her. But her *actual* condition (rather than the *ideal* of 2:1-4) is that of a pride-filled and wicked nation destined for judgment at the hands of God (2:5 – 4:1). Chapter 4 speaks of her as *purged* and *pleasing* as she comes through the just judgment.

3. *Chapter 5* tells Israel again (in the form of a parable in song and its application) of the justice and necessity and certainty of judgment against a people so blessed but so wicked in its ingratitude.

4. *Chapter 6*. The prophet here assures Israel that the message he has received and proclaims (such as is embodied in 1-5) was the one given to him by the Lord God when he was called to the ministry. And, furthermore, it is the only kind of message he and they should expect from an awesomely holy God who wishes his people both to submit to him and trust in him.

5. *Chapters 7 – 12*. These chapters deal with Israel's clash with the Assyrian forces. The situation is actually three cornered. Israel and Syria are confederated against *Judah* which enlists the aid of *Assyria*.

- In chapter 7 Ahaz is given assurance (in spite of himself) that the northern confederacy of Israel and Syria would be defeated and their attempt to overthrow the house of David would fail.
- In chapter 8 this message is repeated in another form. The

northern confederacy is to be destroyed when the Assyrian invades the northern areas. There are those in Judah who will suffer because of their ally, Assyria. But Jehovah will protect Jerusalem and the righteous in Israel are not to panic but to hold on to the promises of God.

- In chapter 9 we have the word that the future glory of *all* Israel rests with the house of David which (in the coming king) would bring glory out of gloom even to those who sought to unseat the Davidic rulers. But though the house of David is the instrument of future glory, Israel, the northern kingdom will be punished by Assyria for its pride and rebellion (9:8–10:4).
- Chapter 10 insists that Assyria will execute judgment on the nation but it equally insists that Assyria is simply God's rod of correction. That being the case, the righteous have no cause to worry when they see the Assyrian doing his fearful work.
- Chapters 11 & 12 give the assurance, once more, that while Assyria is the executor of God's wrath, the line of David is the instrument of God's blessing. One of David's line would be so in tune with God, so successful that he would bring peace and rescue to all Israel and would even become a rallying point for Gentiles. This gives the nation something to sing about in chapter 12.

6. *Chapters 13 – 23.* This group of chapters is an oracle against the nations which have proven themselves to be enemies of God and Israel. Included in the list of peoples who are enemies of God is Judah (chapter 22) which is represented by the capital, Jerusalem. And in that capital is Shebna, who is a fit representative of all that is wicked in the capital.

7. *Chapters 24 – 27.* In these chapters there is a summary of God's dealing with the rebellious nations of the earth. In timeless language 24–25 describe the judging process of the Lord and in 26–27 Israel rejoices in their judgment and acknowledges that her own brings her to repentance while the foreigners remain obdurate. The upshot of all this is, that Israel will come through judgment into the favor of God while the impenitent foreigners will perish.

8. *Chapter 28.* This chapter speaks to drunken Ephraim (Israel) and assures her of coming destruction. And it speaks to faithless Judah who will not trust her God. She is told that her alliances with Assyria and Egypt will not stave off the suffering she wishes to avoid.

9. *Chapter 29.* This chapter speaks of the imminent Sennacherib invasion of Judah. It speaks of Jerusalem at the utter end of its tether and then of God redeeming it. It prophesies of the historical events of 36 – 37.

10. *Chapters 30 – 31.* These two chapters are a forthright condemnation of those who call on Egypt to redeem them from trouble. It wouldn't be so bad if Egypt had ever shown herself to be dependable – she hadn't. And Judah appeals to her rather than Jehovah who has always been dependable.

11. *Chapter 33.* This chapter speaks of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib and his surrounding of Jerusalem. It gives the reason for the Assyrian success as far as it went and speaks of Jerusalem's certain rescue and victory over Sennacherib.

12. *Chapters 34 – 35* tell of God's utter opposition to all the nations which oppose Israel. And using Edom in particular, as representative of all of them, we learn that God will devastate these nations. In contrast to the devastation of the world of the enemy, the land of Israel will be paradisiacal. And to it will come the exiles, returning through a desert which is doctored by God for their return. A return much more glorious than the exit from Egypt.

13. *Chapters 36 – 37* hold the historical record of the events which were prophesied in chapters such as 8, 28 – 29. They tell the story of Sennacherib's assault against God and Jerusalem. They tell of Hezekiah's turning to God in his desperation and of God's redeeming power.

14. *Chapters 38 – 39* speak of Hezekiah's serious illness and his request to God for and the consequent recovery. Chapter 39 tells of the Babylonian interest in the Judean kingdom and the foolishness of Hezekiah in showing them all his treasures. Chapter 39 contains the strong link between 1 – 39 and 40 – 66 – the prediction of Babylonian captivity.

15. *Chapters 40 – 66.* These chapters deal with deliverance for

Israel at the hand of Israel's God. Throughout them there is a captivity assumed (the Babylonian), reasons for it given, assurance of deliverance *and* an insistence that the rescue is the work of *Jehovah*.

- Chapter 40 speaks of God manifesting himself in a new work of Rescue. Israel may have her doubts about it but the redemption is certain.
- Chapter 41. The instrument of God's redeeming work (Cyrus) may strike fear into the nations but Israel has nothing to fear since they have God and the nations have only idols.
- Chapter 42. God's Servant will bring the message of redemption to foreign nations. Though beaten and captive they will be owned by God because the chastisement is due, not to God's weakness but, to his abhorrence of sin. God's dealing with Israel will manifest his care for all who sin.
- Chapter 43. This chapter says, essentially, that the same God who rescued them from Egypt will rescue them from Babylon (and any other oppression) And this is not because Israel is "worthy" of rescue.
- Chapter 44. Despite their unworthiness, God made his choice of them long ago and will live up to his covenanted loyalty. And he is capable of taking care of them in contrast to idols which are powerless.
- Chapter 45. The choice of Cyrus and his success is the work of an omnipotent God who is dedicated to Israel. When Israel calls on God she is heard and vindicated. Foreigners are urged to look away from their idols and look to Jehovah for salvation
- Chapters 46 – 47. The idols of Babylon are satirized and Babylon is assured of her destruction.
- Chapter 48. Israel is verbally chastised for open wickedness. And God, knowing how easily they fall into treachery, explains why he has used prediction and captivity in dealing with them.
- Chapter 49. This chapter is addressed to both Israel and foreigners because neither of them can understand Israel's

chastisement as to its significance. The captivity and the subsequent redemption is to teach *everyone* about sin's need of punishment and God's pardoning mercy.

- Chapters 50 – 52. These chapters are words of comfort from God's enlightened messenger who has been much maligned and mistreated (50). God's dealings with Abraham and Israel when in Egypt are the basis for future optimism concerning deliverance and ultimate victory (51). Chapter 52 further speaks of Zion's coming glory and their redemption from exile.
- Chapter 53. With 52:13-15 we have an explanation of the sufferings of the servant and the announcement of blessing through that suffering.
- Chapters 54 – 55. Restored Israel will find more glory after the pain of exile than she had before and the city which had been razed is to be built with inexpressible splendor (54). And all who are interested can share in the sure mercies of David at the hand of a God who is (unlike Israel or the nations) quick to pardon and pardon abundantly (55).
- Chapter 56. Assurances are given to the foreigners who throw in their lot with rescued Israel (as happened in the deliverance from Egypt) that they would be received of the Lord with favor.
- Chapters 57 – 59. With 56:9-12 these chapters speak of the wickedness of the nation (57), the self-righteousness of the religious (58) and of God's explaining one more time that their pain is due to their wickedness and not his weakness (58:13-59).
- Chapter 60 – 62. With 59:15-21 these chapters speak of the glory of the redeemed nation. Of the restoration of her children by the foreigners (60:4ff), of the rebuilding of a glorious city with the help of foreigners (60:10ff) who will render their services to Israel. And this is the message, one of deliverance, that is put into the heart of God's servant (61:1ff) who tells of Zion's glorious future. Zion's deliverer will give her new names to suit her coming glory (62).
- Chapter 63. The chapter stresses that God *alone* redeems

Israel from her enemies (1-6) and the prophet insists that graciousness and rescue is no new thing with God (7-14).

- Chapter 64. With 63:15-19 this chapter registers the nation's confession of guilt. But it also registers their blaming God, in part, for the terrible state they are in.
- Chapters 65 – 66. These chapters contain God's response to Israel's half-hearted confession and their promise to build him a glorious house if only he will restore them from trouble. Israel says he is hard to find (64:1-7). He says Gentiles who aren't even looking for him are finding him. They offer him a rebuilt house (implied in 64:10-11) and he replies that heaven and earth aren't sufficiently impressive to him so how could their building be (66:1-2). What God is after and what God will bless is a penitent and upright people (65 – 66). Before God is through Gentiles will pay homage to the God of Israel.