

ISAIAH

Prophetic Sayings & Oracles

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- The second half of the eighth century before Christ is best known in world history for when the Assyrian Empire becomes a world power. **The Assyrians dominate chapters 1-39.**
 - It wouldn't be too long until all of the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria (721), with the capital city of Samaria destroyed at that time.
 - In contrast to his father Ahaz, **Hezekiah trusted the Lord** and was delivered from Assyria as they laid siege to Jerusalem.
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Background

- Of course, for Israel, deportation was not just a national or political fear, but a **theological one** as well.

- The people were **chosen and set apart by God** and **living in a land promised to them by God**, so **Assyria was a threat to the covenant distinctiveness of Israel**.

Background

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- The material of Isaiah is arranged to highlight the **trustworthiness of Yahweh**.
 - **This is clearly seen in the contrast between the actions of the two kings** Ahaz and Hezekiah.
 - **Ahaz did not trust Yahweh** but sent for the Assyrians to aid him in time of political crisis (against the advice of Isaiah).
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Purpose and Message

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- **Hezekiah**, though he initially counted on Egyptian help, **depended on Yahweh and was delivered in a mighty way.**
 - Hezekiah thus became a **convincing example of how God in his sovereignty can bring deliverance.**
 - This was an important lesson for the Israelites in exile, who were thereby encouraged to respond to their crisis with trust.
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Purpose and Message

- The purpose of a prophet was to **deliver the words that God gave him to say.**

- The oracles of the first part of Isaiah (1-39) are largely **oracles of indictment and judgment.**

- Chapters 40-66 are more concerned with God's **forgiveness, deliverance, and restoration of Israel.**

Purpose and Message

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- I. Introduction**
 - A. Overture (1-5)**
 - B. Commissioning (6)**
 - II. Assyrian Context**
 - A. Oracles at the Time of Syro-Ephraimite Coalition (7-12)**
 - B. Oracles Against Nations (13-23)**
 - C. Apocalyptic Conclusions to Oracles Against the Nations (24-27)**
 - D. “Woe” Oracles at the Time of the Siege of Jerusalem (28-33)**
 - E. Apocalyptic Conclusion of “Woe” Oracles (34-35)**
 - F. Resolution of Assyrian Crisis (36-37) –**
 - G. Transition to Babylonian Crisis (38-39)**
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Outline of Isaiah

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- III. Projected Oracles Addressing Exiles (40-55)**
 - IV. Projected Oracles Addressing Postexilic Situation (56-66)**
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Outline of Isaiah

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- The unity of the book of Isaiah is a subject of no small controversy.
 - The fact that the prophet lived in the eighth century B.C. makes it very difficult for some people to accept the fact that he could have identified Cyrus the Persian by name (44:28; 45:1), since Cyrus did not live until nearly two hundred years later.
 - Predictive identification such as this is unparalleled.
 - It is commonplace for some to insist that there are at least two different authors of the book, separated from one another by at least 150 years.
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Unity of the Book

- Nevertheless, many believe that a correct understanding of biblical authority demands that the book be viewed as a unity.

- This understanding depends heavily on New Testament passages that associate the prophet Isaiah with the second part of the book (e.g., Matt 3:3; 12:17; Luke 3:4; John 12:38-41; Acts 8:28; Rom 10:16), although evidence from the Old Testament is also used.

- The testimony of the book itself certainly insists on the reality of supernatural prophecy that focuses on the future.

Unity of the Book

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- The whole case for the sovereignty of God in Isaiah 40-48 is built around His ability to predict the future, and the naming of Cyrus comes at a crucial point in this section.
 - Furthermore, there is evidence that the book of Kings, completed by the middle of the exile, used the entire book of Isaiah as a source, which favors a pre-exilic date for the writing of the entire book.
 - There is no reason to deny that the book was put into written form during Isaiah's life, though such cannot be proved.
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Unity of the Book

Son's Names as Signs

- Chapters 7-9 feature four sons whose names were given prophetic significance.
 - Isaiah's own children – Shear-Jashub (“a remnant will return,” 7:3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (“quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil,” 8:1-3) – had such names, and so did Immanuel (“God with us,” 7:14; 8:8, 10) and the child identified in 9:6.
 - These highlighted God's short-term and long-range agendas for Israel.
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Major Themes

The Servant

- Four sections in the book of Isaiah have been designated “**Servant Songs**,” for they speak of a **Servant who would be instrumental in fulfilling God’s plans for Israel**.
 - These passages are 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-11; and 52:13-53:12.
 - 61:1-3 shows some similarity to the Servant Songs, although the designation “servant” is not used.
 - Though the Servant is not called “Messiah” by Isaiah, the function and accomplishments attached to him make it clear these are the same person.
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Major Themes

The Holy One of Israel

- A title for God **used almost exclusively by Isaiah** in the Old Testament is “**The Holy One of Israel.**”
 - This title not only show’s Isaiah’s emphasis on the **holiness of God**, but also reflects the book’s concern over the **seriousness of Israel’s offenses** against God.
 - **Reconciliation is God’s ultimate goal.** Punishment is used to effect reconciliation, and the Servant had a primary role in making it accessible to the people.
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Major Themes

Redeemer

- Another attribute emphasized in Isaiah is that Yahweh is the **Redeemer of Israel**.
 - This title for Yahweh is used only four times elsewhere, but more than a dozen times in the book of Isaiah.
 - All the references lie within chapters 40-66.
 - Again the focus is on the **sovereign grace of God**.
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Major Themes

Eschatology

- The eschatology found in the book of Isaiah is a **kingdom eschatology**.
 - By that we mean that the emphasis is on the **future kingdom of Israel**.
 - **Proper worship and the importance of the law are significant characteristics of this kingdom.**
 - The emphasis is on the fact that Yahweh will reign (24:23; 33:22; 43:15; 44:6) and will be the pride of the remnant of Judah and the glory of Jerusalem.
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Major Themes