

NAME

The word "Isaiah" means "Jehovah saves," "Jehovah is salvation," or "Salvation is of the Lord." Isaiah is the Messianic prophet. The book deals with the salvation of Jehovah. However, it should be kept in mind that salvation is used in its broadest sense involving not only personal salvation, but salvation of the earth: plants, trees, animals, atmosphere, etc., as well. This will be accomplished by Messiah setting up His kingdom.

AUTHOR

Unity (Mitchell):

Over the years there has been a great deal of discussion as to the authorship of this book. The liberal critical scholars operating on naturalistic pre-suppositions insist that there must have been two Isaiahs. This is commonly referred to as the Deutero-Isaiah theory. According to this concept the first thirty-nine chapters were indeed written by the Isaiah who is introduced in the first verse, but the writer of the remaining chapters (40-66) is an unknown individual living around 550 B.C. Indeed some critics postulate a third writer (Trito-Isaiah) for chapters 55-66, who lived around 450 B.C.

Three main arguments are presented against the stated Biblical fact that Isaiah the prophet is the author of the entire book (1:1):

1. The difference in literary style that supposedly existed between the two sections (1-39 and 40-66)
2. The divergent theological ideas
3. The theme and subject matter are supposedly different in the two (or three) sections of the book

There is not a scrap of solid documentary evidence to support these three claims. The book was always written on one scroll. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has greatly strengthened the case for the unity of the book because they found a very early complete scroll of Isaiah (the earliest to date) and it made not distinction between the two sections.

All of the supposed objections have been adequately answered by orthodox Biblical scholarship. It has been shown that indeed there are more similarities in style between the sections than the supposed differences. What differences do exist can easily be explained by the change in Isaiah's circumstances in the later years of his life. No theological contradictions between the sections can be found. The unity is also certified by the New Testament which assumes a single author. By way of example, in John 12:38-41, the Apostle John quotes first from Isaiah 53:1 and then from Isaiah 6:9, and follows with the comment: "*These things* (i.e. these two quotations) *Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.*" Further, it is an established fact that the book was always written on one scroll.

Again, at the heart of the dispute is the matter of naturalistic pre-suppositions. The rationalistic critic cannot accept the fact that prediction in the prophets can occur so when, for example, Isaiah gives the actual name of the Persian Emperor, Cyrus 150 years beforehand, this is rejected as impossible! However, if one assumes the existence of a supernatural God who can make supernatural predictions through the mouth of His prophet this presents no problem at all.

Isaiah's Person:

"Rabbinic tradition has it that Isaiah's father, Amoz (not the same as Amos the prophet), was a brother

of King Amaziah. This would make Isaiah a first cousin of King Uzziah and a grandson of King Joash, and thus of royal blood, a man of the palace” (Halley page 339).

Mitchell:

He was a married man and had two sons. Evidently his wife also had prophetic ability. He was a deeply spiritual man and his favorite expression for God seems to be, “the holy one.” Jewish tradition has it that he was placed in a tree and sawn asunder at the age of 120 by King Manasseh (At least that is what the critics have tried to do with this book.).

Isaiah's Ministry:

Mitchell:

His ministry was primarily to Judah. He seems to have functioned as sort of a preacher to the royal court in Judah at times. When he does direct prophecies toward other nations (Syria, Moab, Egypt, Tyre, etc.) they are incidental to the main thrust which is Judah.

Isaiah's was also a barren ministry (cf. 6:9-13). It seems the louder he cries the less the people would listen and the worse conditions became. He seems never to have been extremely popular.

His was also a long ministry because he ministered under five Judean kings (1:1). This would indicate a ministry of from 60 to 65 years.

Isaiah wrote other books which we do not have: the *Life of Uzziah* (2 Chronicles 26:22) and the *Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (2 Chronicles 32:32). He is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet.

Regarding Isaiah's prophetic ministry - see Halley pages 358-359 for a summary of Isaiah's predictions.

Isaiah's Character (Mitchell):

He possessed great boldness as a reformer. With intense earnestness he lashed out uncompromisingly against sin, fraud, oppression, dishonesty, hypocrisy, and apostasy. By way of example, he is not afraid to stand toe-to-toe with kings like Ahaz and Hezekiah and denounce them (7:13; 38:1). So far as he was concerned, outward forms and ceremonies did not constitute true religion. What God was after was purity of heart and genuine obedience.

Yet, he was at the same time, a man of tender compassion (40:1,2).

Isaiah's Style (Mitchell):

By way of literary style, Isaiah stands out from all other writing prophets. He is noted for his sublime concepts, splendor of diction and brilliance of imagery. Its style is elevated and grand. He is able to depict strong emotions vividly on the printed page and is unsurpassed in the variety of subject matter with which he deals. Truly it has been said that Isaiah was at once a great poet, orator, statesman, and literary genius.

DATE

Probably 740 to 681 B.C. (Active ministry 740 to 700 B.C.) Isaiah was a prophet of the southern kingdom at the time the northern kingdom had been destroyed by the Assyrians.

During Isaiah's long career, he ministered under both good and bad kings (see chart: below). (see chart: Halley page 341).

He also had some associates in the prophetic ministry. Hosea was prophesying in Israel during Isaiah's ministry in Judah. Also, Micah was a cohort with Isaiah in Judah.

As the kingdom comes to an end God increasingly sends prophets. These prophets are real people living in the real time end of the monarchy. Why they said and what they said can be applied to our lives today as there are many similarities to our times and issues as we watch the decline and judgment of the United States.

King	Date	Kingdom	Comments / Spiritual Condition
Azariah (Uzziah)	792-740	Judah	Good - long and successful reign
Jeroboam II	793-753	Israel	Bad - a long, prosperous, but idolatrous reign
Zechariah	753-752	Israel	Bad - Assassinated
Shallum	752	Israel	Bad - Assassinated
Menahem	752-742	Israel	Bad - Extremely brutal reign
Jotham	750-735	Judah	Good—mostly coregent with Uzziah
Pekahiah	742-740	Israel	Bad - Assassinated by Pekah
Pekah	752-732	Israel	Bad - Ruled Gilead from 752-740 B.C. Began his solo reign in 740 B.C. with the assassination of Pekahiah. Under Pekah the northern part of Israel was taken into captivity (734 B.C.)
Hoshea	732-722	Israel	Bad - The last king of Israel. Samaria fell in 721 B.C.
Ahaz	735-715	Judah	Bad - Very wicked (2 Chronicles 28). Samaria was besieged 3 years by Shalmanezar and deported to Assyria by Sennacherib in 722 B.C. The north was repopulated with Chaldeans.
Hezekiah	715-686	Judah	Good - (2 Chronicles 29). Judah was invaded by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.
Manasseh	697-642	Judah	Really bad - Very wicked (2 Chronicles 33). Jewish tradition says that Manasseh had Isaiah executed (see above: Isaiah's Person).

THEME

Type of Literature: Prophecy / Major Prophet

Halley (page 43): "The Messianic Prophet"

Mitchell: "The Salvation of Jehovah"

Isaiah's horizon is broader than most prophets. When he speaks of salvation it is in the broadest sense. He sees not only the salvation of the individual and of the nation of Israel, but he envisions the Gentiles as participating in the salvation that Messiah and His kingdom will provide. In glowing words he sees the whole weary earth with its vicious beasts tired from the effects of sin - all revived in the kingdom.

The fact is that Isaiah has more to say about what life on this earth will be like when Messiah's kingdom is established than any other single prophet.

Key Word (Nelson's): Salvation is of the Lord - The basic theme of this book, sometimes called "the fifth gospel," is found in Isaiah's name: "Salvation Is of the Lord." Humanity has great need for salvation, and only God's great provision will suffice.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it" (Isaiah 9:6,7).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 53 - Along with Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 lists the most remarkable and specific prophecies of the atonement of the Messiah.

The Messiah King - Isaiah 11 (Nelson's):

Even in the midst of his prophecies of judgment, Isaiah described the ideal King whose rule would contrast with the dark reign of King Ahaz (Isaiah 7; 2 Chronicles 28:1-4). The role remained unfulfilled until the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

THE MESSIAH	HIS KINGDOM
The Branch - a descendant of David, the stem of Jesse (11:1,10)	The Gentiles will seek Him (11:10)
God's Spirit will rest upon Him (11:2)	The remnant of Israel will be gathered (11:11-16)
He will fear the Lord (11:3)	There will be joy in God's salvation (12:1-6)
He will judge the earth with righteousness (11:4,5)	

The Suffering Servant - Isaiah 52-53 (Nelson's):

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the final of the four Servant Songs (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9), describes the saving work of the Servant in five stanzas: His humiliation and rejection (52:13-15); His rejection (53:1-3); His suffering (53:4-6); His death (53:7-9); and His atonement (53:10-12). This chart notes specific descriptions of the Servant and the New Testament witness to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

THE PROPHECY	THE FULFILLMENT
He will be exalted (52:13)	Philippians 2:9
He will be disfigured by suffering (52:14; 53:2)	Mark 15:17,19
He will make a blood atonement (52:15)	1 Peter 1:2
He will be widely rejected (53:1,3)	John 12:37,38
He will bear our sins and sorrows (53:4,5)	Romans 4:25; 1 Peter 2:24,25;
He will be our substitute (53:6,8)	2 Corinthians 5:21
He will voluntarily accept our guilt and punishment (53:7,8)	John 10:11; 19:30
He will be buried in a rich man's tomb (53:9)	John 19:38-42
He will save us who believe in Him (53:10,11)	John 3:16; Acts 16:31
He will die on behalf of transgressors (53:12)	Mark 15:27,28; Luke 22:37

Outline:

I. Prophecies Of Condemnation 1-35

- A. Prediction of judgment (1-5)
- B. The prophetic call and commission (6)
- C. The promise of restoration (7-12)
 - 1. note the promise of hope through the future Messiah (9)
 - 2. and the coming Messianic kingdom (11,12)
- D. Concerning the surrounding nations (13-27)
- E. Concerning Israel, Judah, and the world (28-35)

II. Historic Interlude 36-39

This historic parenthesis connects the first part (1-35) and the second parts (40-66) of the prophecy. For many years the critics rejected the historicity of these events, but today history validates the fact that the Assyrians did attack Jerusalem. God evidently considered this incident of enough significance to have it recorded three times for us in His word (2 Kings 18, 19; 2 Chronicles 29, 30; and Isaiah 36-39). It bespeaks the fact that God has an important truth thereby to impart.

- A. Hezekiah's problem (36)
- B. Hezekiah's prayer (37)
- C. Hezekiah's illness (38)
- D. Hezekiah's indiscretion (39)

III. Prophecies of Consolation 40-66

- A. The deliverance (40-48)
 - 1. The promise of deliverance (48)

B. The deliverer (49-57)

In these chapters many of the thoughts revolve around “the servant of Jehovah.” In a few passages the servant seems to be Israel (nationally), but in most it is a reference to the Messiah (the one in whom Israel is personified and in whom the promise to Israel would eventually be consummated). In the Bible a prominent personage and a nation may both be identified under a single figure of speech (cf. in Daniel 2 - both Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom are seen as the head of gold).

1. His commission (49-52:12)

2. His sacrifice (52:13-53:12)

a. The mystery of the servant’s career (52:13-15)

- The successful servant - prospered and lifted high (52:13)
- The suffering servant - God caused him to suffer - suffering explained by the cross (52:14)
- Messiah’s glory explained by the second coming (52:15)

b. The rejection of the servant (53:1-3)

c. The atonement of the servant (53:4-6)

- Note the sinner’s substitute (53:5,6)

d. The submission of the servant (53:7-9)

- Quiet: Did not open his mouth, like a silent sheep

e. The exaltation of the servant (53:10,12)

- Would have many offspring - we are children of God

3. His salvation (54-57)

a. Israel’s salvation envisioned (54)

b. Universal salvation offered (55)

c. Gentile salvation blessings (56:1-8)

d. Condemnation of the wicked in Israel (56:9-57:21)

C. The delivered (58-66)

1. The need of deliverance (58:1-59:19)

The sins of God’s people are graphically set forth to illustrate the need for deliverance. Judah’s religious observances are a hollow mockery: the people love neither God nor their fellow man (58). Society is rotten to the core, riddled with lies, dishonesty, injustice, malice, and violence. This section read much like today’s news.

2. The promise to be delivered (59:20-60:22)

The Messiah promised. The sin and ingratitude of the people (58:1-59:19) stands in stark contrast to what God wants to do for His people. In His love He will some day send the Messiah (59:20,21) through whom Israel will be enlightened, enlarged, and exalted (60)

3. The blessings of deliverance (61-66)

Isaiah speaks of Messiah coming and ministering to His people (61). At that time Jerusalem will be seen as an object of praise in the earth (62). Israel will be avenged thoroughly and finally of all her enemies (63,64). Under Messiah, Israel will be preserved forever (65). The final chapter forms sort of a synoptic finale which restates the leading prophetic themes of the book (66)

RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically the Hebrews...and us.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

See Halley's introduction to the prophets (Halley page 335)

Isaiah is properly placed at the head of the prophetic books. It is most prominent and unequalled in its literary quality, vision of the kingdom of God, and prophetic Messianic content. It is rightfully compared with John's Revelation. The subject matter of the suffering of the Messiah is touched on by other prophets but not exceeded in scope of explanation.

The importance of Isaiah's prophecy can be demonstrated in several ways. The sheer bulk of it is significant. This one book contains more material than all of the minor prophets combined. Its importance can be also seen in the many times it is directly quoted (66 times by the New Testament writers - more than any other writing prophets). 20 of the 27 New Testament books quote Isaiah. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Isaiah speaks so much of the redemption that is to be provided through the Messiah. It has been said that if the New Testament were lost, a sinner could be led to Christ solely from the many passages in Isaiah. The book of Isaiah has been labeled the "fifth Gospel."

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

In general Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.