

LITERARY OVERVIEW

Read 1:1-2:5 66:14-24

- **Title:** Isaiah – “Yahweh saves”, the name of the prophet of God throughout the book.
- **Author:** Traditionally, the whole book is attributed to Isaiah, son of Amoz. There is a possibility that this means that he was from the royal family. There is little known of the prophet, and there is not much autobiographical material outside of his “calling” as a prophet in ch.6. According to tradition, he is the one who was “sawn in two” referred to in Hebrews 11:37.
 - During the “higher criticism” movement (and since), theories suggesting 2 (deuteron) or more “Isaiahs” arose. According to this theory, the book is written covering 200 years, longer than a single Isaiah would have lived.
 - The reasons for a multiple Isaiah authorship include: (1.) Difference in writing styles in various sections (2.) information that (on a naturalistic presupposition) Isaiah could not have known beforehand (3.) writing that assumes an exilic background (which would be after the time of Isaiah).
 - The reasons to accept the testimony of 1:1 as the author of the entire book include (1.) A unified testimony of the ancient world (including the New Testament writers, Jesus, the intertestamental books, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and later OT prophets who quote the book (making an earlier authorship necessary (2.) a unity of writing style that runs throughout, allowing for change of style over time (like all of our writing) and (3.) the supernatural reality of the living God speaking to prophets.
- **Date:** The author puts the writing during the days of 4 kings of Judah (1:1), with the prophetic call coming in the year that King Uzziah died (6:1), c.740B.C..
- **Setting:** (see outline)
- **Form/Genre:** Prophetic literature. This includes poetic, apocalyptic, satirical, and visionary pieces. While the bulk of prophecy is “forth telling”, God addressing the current situation, Isaiah has a large final section of the book that is “foretelling” of future events. It is apocalyptic in portions, meaning that the future is described using symbols. Satire – there are many instances of, and whole sections of satire.
- **Main Characters:** God is primary character, and the primary concern is what is His disposition and response to sin.
- **Purpose:** To warn the wicked (of the consequences of sin in future judgment) and comfort the righteous (with an assurance of God’s faithfulness and promise of a future Messianic hope and Kingdom). There is a repeated warning not to trust the rulers of other nations or their armies, but to trust in the LORD, the covenant God of Israel.
- **Challenges:** To not get weary of repeated cycles (read in portions, rather than as a whole), not to try read it as a chronological narrative, keep in mind the prophetic and visionary quality (caution to not take symbols too far or literal), don’t get discouraged by its judgment of evil (by drinking deeply of its consolation).
- Some of the most memorable and well-known passages of Scripture from the Old Testament are found in Isaiah, and it is quoted the most in the Greek Scriptures (NT) 2nd only to the Psalms.
- The “Servant Poems” of chs. 49-53 are some of the clearest gorgeous displays of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures.

OUTLINE

- I. THE ASSYRIAN THREAT TO JUDAH (late 8th Century) – Chs. 1-39
- II. THE BABYLONIAN EXILE (6th Century) – Chs. 40-55
- III. THE GLORIOUS FUTURE FOR RETURNED EXILES – Chs. 56-66