

Isaiah, The Prophet And The Prophecy
An Introduction To Isaiah
The Gospel According To Isaiah
Isaiah 1:1

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Whenever I start a new book of the Bible, either in a study or just for my own personal study, I find I always want to know a bit about the background of the book. Who is it that the Holy Spirit used to write the book? What do we know about the person that God is using?

Isaiah, the man, was a prophet of God and we will see that his base of operations was in Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah. In the book, Isaiah provides the vision or prophecy given to him by God. This prophecy includes the current, near future and far future of God's people, the Jews. He deals with both kingdoms that were in existence during his life, the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Isaiah also spends a lot of time telling us about the Messiah, to include significant detail about His first and second coming. Isaiah also provides some history of events taking place in the region as well.

The one thing I have learned over the years reading and studying this book is that Isaiah is a magnificent book to not only read, but to also study. I think Oswalt said it best about this book. "Of all the books in the OT, Isaiah is perhaps the richest. Its literary grandeur is unequalled. Its scope is unparalleled. The breadth of its view of God is unmatched. In so many ways it is a book of superlatives. Thus it is no wonder that Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the NT, and along with Psalms and Deuteronomy, one of the most frequently cited of all OT books." (Oswalt 1986, 3)

Dr. Utlely goes further in regard to how the authors of the New Testament relied on Isaiah. "The content of the book of Isaiah shows up all over the New Testament. Isaiah is quoted more often in the NT than any other prophet (over 411 times). His message was one of a radical universal monotheism and a redemptive plan for all creation." (Utlely 2001, 1)

As to where the book is placed into our Bible, let's do a quick review of our Old Testament. The Old Testament is subdivided into five parts in most Bible translations.

Old Testament

5 books of the Law (Torah) (Books of Moses)
12 books of history
5 books of wisdom
5 major prophets
12 minor prophets

The book of Isaiah is the first of the major prophets. It falls immediately after the last book of wisdom, the Song of Solomon, also known as the Song of Songs. The reason why Isaiah is referred to as a major prophet has nothing to do with the content of the book or the author; but it has to do with the overall length of the book. Those books categorized as "Major Prophets" just happen to be longer books than the smaller prophetic books. Those shorter length books are called the minor prophets. Again, it is not a statement on the content or the author, just the length.

By the way, if you were to look in the Hebrew Bible, you would find an entirely different order for the books. It would look quite foreign to those who have spent a lifetime in other translations.

Hebrew Bible

Torah – Five Books of Moses
Nevi'im - The Prophets
The Former Prophets
Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
The Latter Prophets
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve
Kethuvim – The Writings

Right at the very beginning of the book, Isaiah, the man, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, lets us know the who, what, when and where of the book.

Isaiah 1:1

“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” (NASB95)

He gets right down to it, just who is Isaiah? He begins the process of answering that question for us with the very first part of verse 1 of the book. He lets us know that he is the son of Amoz, not to be confused with Amos. Jewish tradition says he is related to the king, but we are not told one way or the other in the scriptures. We just know that his lineage is simply he is the son of Amoz, you know Amoz right?

Isaiah also self identifies as the author by stating the book is the vision of Isaiah, in other words, it is prophecy. Prophecy about who, what and where? He answers that question by telling us the prophecy concerns Judah, the southern half of the nation of Israel and more specifically, the capital of Judah, Jerusalem. The time period that Isaiah ministers in covers the reign of four kings, and mostly likely a portion of a fifth as well.

Isaiah 1:1 is not the only place where Isaiah claims to be the author of the book. Isaiah leaves footprints of authorship for us in multiple place: 1:1; 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2,3; 37:2,6; 38:1, 4, 21; 39:3, 5, 8.

In the new testament, there are 22 references to the prophet from Jesus as well as the disciples. There was no question about the authorship of the book with Jesus or His followers. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus had no doubt as to who penned Isaiah or that section of the book that contains a prophecy naming names.

Flavius Josephus

...for he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia:—“Thus saith Cyrus the King:—Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets; and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.”

This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision:—“My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.” This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished.

Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and, beside that, beasts for their sacrifices. (Josephus and Whiston 1987, 286)

About Isaiah being the author of the book.

There is no record of any serious scholar doubting the Isaianic authorship of the entire book before the twelfth century when Ibn Ezra, a Jewish commentator, did so. With the rise of rationalism, however, some German scholars took the lead in questioning it in the late eighteenth century. (Constable 2003, Isaiah 1:1)

As you do additional reading or research into this book, you will see that there are those who think chapters 1 – 39 were written by one Isaiah, and a different Isaiah wrote chapters 40 – 66. You may see the term “Deutero-Isaiah” thrown about. There are even those who say there are three Isaiah’s. This is called the Trito-Isaiah theory and subdivides the book three ways, 1-39, 40-55, 56-66. These are theories which question the authorship of this book, something that Jesus did not have any issues with.

The theories questioning the authorship of Isaiah predominately date from the late 1700’s and involve ideas from a bunch of dead German theologians. Rather than bore you with the history of who said what and when about their theories and the arguments from scholarship, I am going to rely on “the” authority of the Word of God. None other than Jesus Christ as well as someone who walked and talked with Jesus, the apostle John. There was no question, at that time, as to who the author was and in fact it appears that the Holy Spirit, knowing in advance of the attempt to question authorship of the book, planted something for us in advance in John.

In John 12, Jesus is having a discussion with a crowd of people and John refers to two sections of scripture from Isaiah. The references are from both portions of the so called Deutero-Isaiah discussed earlier. You will see that Isaiah is named by name as the author of both sections.

John 12:35–41

“So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?” (Isaiah 53:1) For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, “HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.” (Isaiah 6:10) These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.” (NASB95)

Jesus and His disciples, including John, obviously had no difficulty attributing the entire book to one person, Isaiah. John’s use of the two sections of Isaiah, literally from First Isaiah and Second Isaiah, and attributing them both to the same author, effectively shreds the theory.

Isaiah’s name, יְשַׁעְיָהוּ, Yeshaiyah. “The name is a compound one, and signifies “Jehovah’s salvation.” The prophet was conscious that it was not merely by accident that he bore this name; for ישַׁע (he shall save) and יְשׁוּעָה (salvation) are among his favourite words.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 45)

Getting back to who, what, when and where; the lineage of Isaiah, as we see in the very beginning of the book, he is the son of Amoz, not Amos, and this book is a vision, one that spans the rule of four Judean Kings, five if we include King Manasseh; under whose reign Isaiah, per tradition, was martyred under. Is there anything else that we know about Isaiah? He had two children, revealed later in the book and was married to a prophetess, also revealed later in the book. Isaiah also may have authored a portion of Chronicles.

OF ISAIAH, “the evangelical prophet,” nothing is known beyond what we are told of him in the Scriptures. Various traditions concerning him are current among the Jews, such as that his father Amoz was brother of King Amaziah, and that he himself died a martyr’s death, being sawn asunder by order of Manasseh; but all that is certain is, that he was the son of Amoz; that his prophetic ministry commenced in the reign

of Uzziah, and closed in that of Hezekiah (ch. 1:1); that his wife was a prophetess (ch. 8:3), and bare him two sons (ch. 7:3; 8:3); and that he was the author of a portion of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah (2 Chron. 26:22). (Bertram and Tucker 1892, 1)

To understand the prophecies of Isaiah, we need to have a bit more understanding of the economic and geopolitical framework he was ministering under. As we see in the first verse, there are four (five) kings in Judah that his ministry spans. The historical background appears in other places in the scriptures.

The background is in 2 Kings 15 – 21. I have included chapter 21 which includes Manasseh as it is under that King, Isaiah was martyred.

The historical background also appears in 2 Chronicles 26 – 33, again including Manasseh.

Did Manasseh kill Isaiah?

Jewish Talmudic Tradition

The Babylonian Talmud attributes Isaiah's death to Manasseh in two locations.

And in it was written, 'Manasseh killed Isaiah.' (Neusner 2011, 251)

Moreover Manasseh shed much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kgs. 21:16):

Here [in Babylonia] it is explained that he killed Isaiah, [and that is the sin at hand]. (Neusner, The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary 2011, 553)

The scriptures hint at the event. We look to the faith hall of fame in Hebrews 11 and we see how some, who are not specifically named, met their ends as a result of following the Lord.

Hebrews 11:37–38

"They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground." (NASB95)

Geopolitical Realities

At this point in the history of God's people, they are divided into two separate political states. The Jews are subdivided into two separate Kingdoms. Why? The sin of Solomon.

The Torah sets out, very explicitly, how the King of Israel was to live and lead. Contained in it were the basic operating instructions for the King. Solomon did not follow it and in fact it almost appears that he went out of his way to fail. As we know, he was not a stupid man, but in the end, he acted like a fool. I have added emphasis to the major place where Solomon failed.

Deuteronomy 17:14–20

"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' **He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away;** nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of

his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.” (NASB95)

1 Kings 11:1–13

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. **For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.** For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom (Moloch) the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. **So the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”** (NASB95)

Solomon loved too many women. He allowed his love for these women to cloud his judgement regarding his faith in YAHWEH. Solomon, because of his woman problems, wound up establishing sites of worship in and around Jerusalem for different gods, some that became a major problem for the nation. The gods of the nations surrounding them that they had been specifically commanded to not worship (Deuteronomy 4:15-19.) They did wind up turning towards that which YAHWEH had said to not turn towards, and Solomon is the one who helped start it. The things you do for love. These gods would become a serious problem for Israel and Judah resulting ultimately in both nations going into exile.

One location, in the immediate environs of Jerusalem, would become infamous and even remains so today, the Valley of Hinnom. It was that valley that saw the establishment of Moloch worship, a type of worship that included the sacrificing of babies. Jesus used the name of the valley as a comparative for hell.

Moses set it out in the Torah, Deuteronomy 18:10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer.” (NASB95) But, as we have learned from our own experiences, many times a prohibition of some type of conduct creates the temptation to actually do it. King Ahaz, one of the Kings during the time period covered by Isaiah, ignored the prohibition. “But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel.” (2 Kings 16:3, NASB95). This sin was picked up again by Manasseh to the degree that in Jeremiah 32, we learn it became possibly “the” major reason why Jerusalem had to fall. We still do the same sin of child sacrifice today, we just do it pre-birth and call it choice, but that is not how God saw it then or how it sees it now.

While in exile in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel clearly states the issue at hand. “Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire.” (Ezekiel 16:20–21, NASB95) This is what was going on in the Valley of Hinnom.

From a military perspective, the post Solomon reality to be faced by Israel and Judah, the two nations that resulted from the split, engaged in a cold civil war that occasionally went hot, for much of their history. There would be invitations to go to war together, and at times they would go to war with each other. Ultimately, the King of Judah will use political intrigue and clod hard cash to solve the problem. After being attacked by the northern kingdom and their Syrian allies and losing over 100,000 dead, King Ahaz basically bribed the Assyrian Empire to intervene. This created an environment where the northern kingdom and Syria wind up going away into exile at the hands of the Assyrian Empire. But the Assyrians were invited to do so and paid off to boot by King Ahaz. This backfired. More to come on that.

At the beginning of the split, shortly after Solomon's death, when Israel, the northern kingdom, first split off, there were some difficult political questions that had to be dealt with almost immediately. Under their new King, Jeroboam, rather than seek the Lord for solutions, he came up with his own solutions to these questions and sucessfully began the downward spiral for the northern kingdom. The primary question was, "how do you keep a new nation of people together as one when their current place of worship is actually in the capital city of the "other" kingdom?"

Jeroboam's solution to this question produced the politically expedient solution that took the first steps towards the final march to exile under Assyria. He created his own form of worship. This sin is evidenced by a repeating phrase in the scriptures.

2 Kings 15:9

"He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin." (NASB95)

So what did Jeroboam do?

1 Kings 12:26–31

Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. (NASB95)

Jeroboam made idol worship politically correct in Israel. Overnight, he went out of his way to offend everyone who were loyal followers of YAHWEH, to include all members of the tribe of Levi. He expanded the priesthood beyond the tribe of Levi and made priests of those who were not supposed to be priests. With the political situation in the north making a Godly way of life untenable, the people then did just the same as people today do, they move. The YAHWEH worshippers moved south to Judah; the idolaters in Judah, moved north to Israel.

The evidence of Jeroboam's actions can still be seen today in the north of Israel at Tel Dan. At that location, the high place of Jeroboam has been found and can be seen today.



(Bolen 2012, Used with permission)

The complex that was built by Jeroboam can still be clearly seen today.



(Bolen, Dan aerial from east 2012, Used with permission)

And as can be seen in the picture below, excavations have taken place showing us clearly the high place of one of the locations built by Jeroboam, this one in Dan.



(Bolen, Dan high place aerial 2012, Used with permission)

Thanks to the actions of King Jeroboam, from that point forward, it was politically correct to worship idols in the north. Fast forward to the time of Isaiah and now, as far as it went for YAHWEH worship among His people, there is full blown idolatry in the north. IN the south, they are playing around with the idea of idolatry and are beginning to move in that direction. The Priests, as we will see under King Hezekiah,

were not exactly the most diligent at maintaining purity and holiness either; if the Priests are not pointing the way by living holy, how goes the rest of the nation. As we shall learn, down the drain.

Again, geopolitically, there is a cold war between the north and the south which explodes now and then into full blown battles and destruction. The rest of the area though also begins to flex military power as well. The surrounding gentile powers are becoming more and more destructive and showing up more and more often. Keeping them out is becoming more problematic for both kingdoms.

A point will be reached during Isaiah's lifetime, where both Kingdoms will experience difficulty in maintaining military and political power. Both of these types of power are referenced in Torah, but the retention of it is contingent upon obedience and loyalty to YAHWEH. We shall see that is the primary reason they will experience issues.

Economics And Politics

Things were good up in the northern kingdom in Israel, or so they all thought. There were two chariots in every garage, economically things were good. What could possibly go wrong. They worshipped false gods.

Jeroboam II, the King in Israel just prior to Isaiah's ministry starting up, had supposedly put the Syria military problem to rest and was extracting money from them. At the same time, Assyria had other problems to deal with over in the Tigris and Euphrates River basins. There was relative peace in the area thanks to Jeroboam II. "The military successes of Jeroboam II were considerable. He was able to restore the borders of Israel as they had been in the earlier days of the northern kingdom. His kingdom stretched from the "entrance of Hamath"—the high slopes in the valley between the two ranges of the Lebanon mountains—to "the sea of the plain," i.e., the Dead Sea." (Smith 1995, 2 Ki 14:23-29)

Down south in Judah, they were also experiencing good times economically and militarily. Under King Uzziah (Azariah), things in the south were good. He became King at the age of 16 and reigned 52 years. He was a Godly King, for the most part. He was successful on the battlefield and eventually subjugated the Philistines, Arabs and the Meunites (tribal group of Arabs) extracting tribute from them. His military power was recognized by the surrounding powers as he had a large standing professional army. We pick up with some background from 2 Chronicles 26.

2 Chronicles 26:8–11

The Ammonites also gave tribute to Uzziah, and his fame extended to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the corner buttress and fortified them. He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock, both in the lowland and in the plain. He also had plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil. Moreover, Uzziah had an army ready for battle, which entered combat by divisions according to the number of their muster, prepared by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the official, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officers. (NASB95)

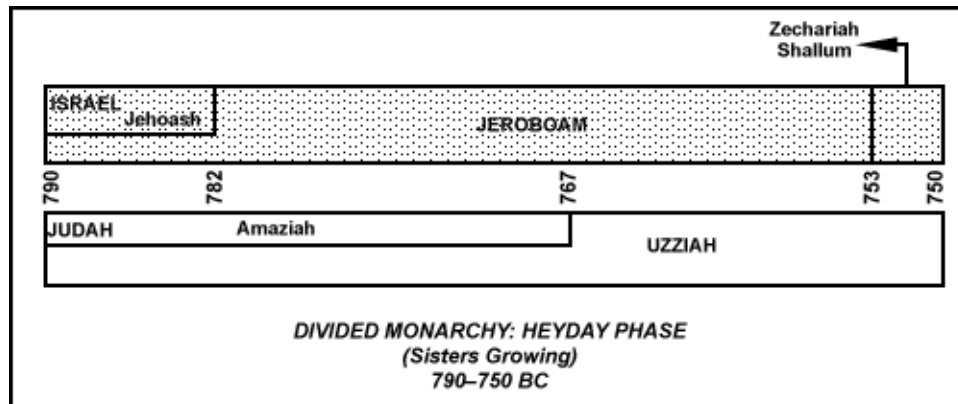
Life was good. Everyone, in both kingdoms, is making money, there is plenty of food, and there is peace enforced by a strong professional military. There is this problem of idol worship up north though and in the south, they were playing around with the idea. But back to Uzziah. As we learn in 2 Kings 15, he did not take away the high places which the people were beginning to frequent. Those high places were not involved in worship of YAHWEH.

2 Kings 15:3–4

"He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places." (NASB95)

Things were good in the north and the south, and that was the problem as what happens to Godly people over time when things are good? Right, complacency and Uzziah, the man, had the same problem.

Uzziah was a great leader, and that became a problem for him as he read some of his own press clippings. To get a better sense between north and south rule, here is a comparative from James Smith.



(Smith 1995, 2 Ki 14:23-29)

2 Chronicles 26:16–21

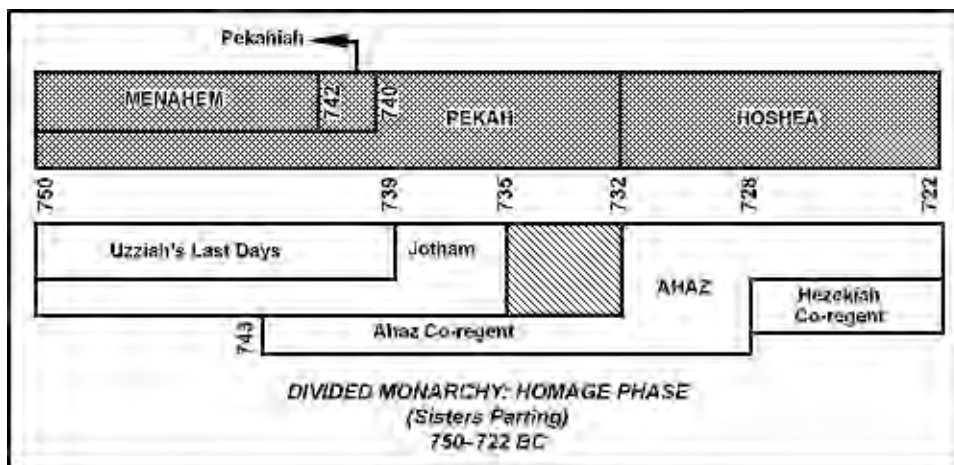
But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God." But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him. King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land." (NASB95)

Oops.

His pride got the better of him. He had read the latest in the Jerusalem Post about how great a leader he was and what a good general he was, and he began to believe it. His pride got the best of him and he paid a very heavy price for it. As King, Uzziah was not a priest. He was not to do any priestly functions, but he sure was going to try.

This was not the first time for someone to have a problem when burning incense. Back in Leviticus 10:1-2, a couple of priests, Nadab and Abihu, offered incense inappropriately and they paid for it with their lives.

Archaeological finds have confirmed for us the disease that God judged Uzziah with. Uzziah's burial plaque tells the story of what happened very clearly. "His stone burial-plaque has been discovered on the Mount of Olives, and it reads: "Here, the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah, were brought. Do not open."" (Bible and Spade 17 2004, 92)



(Smith 1995, 2 Ki 15:23-26)

There is more to this story which we will get to as we study Isaiah.

One of the reasons why a study of this book is so timely for us today is because of the events taking place during the time that Isaiah ministered. There is economic prosperity as well as military success on the part of both kingdoms. One kingdom has gone whole hog into a sinful lifestyle with some significant holdouts to it, whereas the other kingdom plays a show of being holy, but their hearts are rapidly moving away from God due to their prosperity.

As we can tell from the Uzziah problem, pride in Judah's military might is high.

Things are about to change for both nations. YAHWEH wanted to make certain that the warnings were clearly heard. The handwriting is on the wall. To ensure the message is heard, YAHWEH has appointed more than one person as a prophet during this time. There are four ministering to the two nations and there is one who was sent to Assyria. Isaiah was a contemporary of several other prophets. You would think that with ministries of that type going on, people would get it and listen to what YAHWEH has to say.

You also would think that people would listen today as well.

Sent to the Assyrian's in Nineveh was Jonah. Back home, "Amos and Hosea ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel at this time, and Micah and Isaiah served in Judah." (Constable 2003, Isaiah 1:1)

Amos - "The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." (Amos 1:1, NASB95)

Hosea - "The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." (Hosea 1:1, NASB95)

Micah - "The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." (Micah 1:1, NASB95)

Isaiah lived in and ministered from the capital city of Judah, Jerusalem. There are Jewish traditions that he was related to Uzziah and as such had the political and family connections necessary for the level of access he obviously has. He ministered for over 54 years.

Isaiah ministered during the reigns of four Judean kings (1:1): Uzziah (792-740 B.C.), Jotham (750-732 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). The prophet began his ministry in the year that King Uzziah (or Azariah) died, namely, 740 or 739 B.C. (6:1). (Constable 2003, Isaiah 1:1)

We know that he ministered during the reign of those four Judean kings because he tells us. He also extended into the reign of a fifth Judean king. "At the accession of Manasseh, Isaiah would be eighty-four; and if he prophesied for eight years afterwards, he must have endured martyrdom at ninety-two; so Hosea prophesied for sixty years." (Jamieson and Fausset 1997, 428)

The coming changes, which YAHWEH provided for with four prophets ministering at the same time, would be of such magnitude that some will call into question their faith in YAHWEH. The world view for a Jew at that time is one that comes from Deuteronomy 32:8 "When the Most High distributed nations as he scattered the descendants of Adam, he set up boundaries for the nations according to the number of the angels of God. And his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, Israel an allotment of his inheritance." (Deuteronomy 32:8–9, LES)

The two Kingdoms thought they were bullet proof. They also believed that since they were the chosen people of YAHWEH and their land was holy that there is no possible way anything could happen to them. In other words, they forgot what Moses had told them in Deuteronomy.

This idea of being chosen has a deep history for the Jews. "Israel was holy ground because it was Yahweh's "inheritance," in the language of Deuteronomy 32:8–9. The territory of other nations belonged to other elohim because Yahweh had decreed it. Psalm 82 told us that these lesser elohim were corrupt. We aren't told how the elohim Yahweh assigned to the nations became corrupt, only that they were. It is clear from Deuteronomy 4:19–20; 17:3; 29:25; and 32:17 that these elohim were illegitimate for Israelite worship." (Heiser 2015, 116)

Because of this, Israel and Judah were not to play around with those elohim, those false gods. They failed.

Because of a continuing refusal to be obedient, God's people were either already across the line that Moses and Joshua spent a great amount of effort describing, or were about to cross that line unless something changed and changed quickly. God knew what was coming.

Deuteronomy 4:19–20

"And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today." (NASB95)

The warning was clear.

These were eventful times. The mighty Assyrian Empire was expanding westward and swallowing up smaller kingdoms like Israel and Judah. By 722 B.C., the Assyrians had conquered Israel, taken its people into exile, and made its territory an Assyrian province. Judah also became an Assyrian subject. When Judah eventually rebelled, the Assyrians invaded the land (701 B.C.) and conquered the region surrounding Jerusalem. Only the Lord's miraculous intervention, in response to King Hezekiah's prayer, saved the city (see Isa. 36–37). Isaiah lived through all of this, prophesying these events and challenging God's people to repent. (Chisolm, Jr. 2002, 13)

The northern kingdom, Israel, had already crossed over the line. It was already too late for the northern kingdom of Israel, but for Judah, there was still time for repentance to take hold. God does not announce He is done with the south until after Manasseh's reign. King Josiah, at the beginning of the revival he leads in Judah, inquired of the prophetess Huldah.

2 Chronicles 34:23–25

She said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken Me and

have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place and it shall not be quenched.” ” (NASB95)

The people really believed that there is no way that YAHWEH, the God of the Universe would ever fail them no matter how bad their lifestyle became. They felt they could add all the additional gods they wanted to and still rely upon YAHWEH ultimately for protection as they were His people. They forgot what Moses had warned them about in Deuteronomy 28. This was not the first time.

Deuteronomy 28:36–37

“The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the LORD drives you.” (NASB95)

1 Samuel 4:10–11

“So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.” (NASB95)

The custom of the time was, if my army beat yours, then it met my god was more powerful than yours. If I could capture your god, then I would put it in the house of my god. The Philistines did that, but it did not end well for them.

We will see this same attitude conveyed later in Isaiah by the Assyrians who also will have a serious problem as a result.

We will also see the ultimate result of disobedience to YAHWEH. Isaiah will predict the fall of Israel and the exile of the northern kingdom as a result. Then we will see it happen. Note the Assyrian bragging in 2 Kings 18.

2 Kings 18:33–35

“Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?” (NASB95)

Recapping, Isaiah, is a prophet from the tribe of Judah, living and ministering in Judah in the capital city of Jerusalem. Most likely closely related to the King.

He is married with two children and not only does he hear from God but so does his wife who is called a prophetess. The names of his children were object lessons in judgement.

In Isaiah 20:2 we catch a sense of what his attire possibly was for most of his ministry, sackcloth.

Isaiah begins and ends with an indictment. Initially it is for His people, but ultimately it will be for all unredeemed mankind.

Sin is rebellion for Isaiah that springs from pride. The book begins and ends on this note (1:2; 66:24). All the evil in the world results from man’s refusal to accept Yahweh’s lordship. (Constable 2003, Isaiah 1:1)

Isaiah 1:1–3

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, “Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master’s manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.” (NASB95)

Isaiah 66:24

“Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.” (NASB95)

Isaiah will provide a complete picture for us. He will cover the past, present, near future and distant future for God’s people, Israel. He also will provide much of the same information of those gentile nations that he is warning the nation about.

Part of making certain they are not shaken from faith is the future expectation of God once again turning to His people. But there is consistency in the message that begins and ends with the requirement that “Peace on earth requires repentance and divine intervention.” (Constable 2003, Isaiah 1:1)

As with Ezekiel, we see a clear calling from YAHWEH and His divine council.

Surprisingly, Isaiah has a simple theme, one that he presents in detail. The Lord Jesus Christ.

He covers the virgin birth, the character of Messiah, His life, His death, His resurrection and His second coming.

He also spends a great amount of time talking about the pending judgement of YAHWEH. This is reflected in the high-level outline of the book.

Outline

1. Judgement 1 – 35
2. History 36 – 39
3. Salvation of YHWH – The Servant 40 – 57
4. The Glory of YHWH – The Conqueror 58 – 66

Works Cited

- Bertram, R. A., and Alfred Tucker. 1892. *Isaiah 1-39, Vol. 1, The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary*. New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- Bible and Spade* 17. 2004.
- Bolen, Todd. 2012. "Dan aerial from east." *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands Revised & Expanded Galilee and the North Volume 1*. BiblePlaces.com.
- Bolen, Todd. 2012. "Dan high place aerial." *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands Revised & Expanded Galilee and the North Volume 1*. Prod. Todd Bolen.
- Bolen, Todd. 2012. "Tel Dan sign." *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands Revised & Expanded Galilee and the North Volume 1*. Prod. Todd Bolen.
- Chisolm, Jr. , Robert B. 2002. *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Constable, Tom. 2003. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*. Galaxie Software.
- Heiser, Michael S. 2015. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible, First Edition*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Jamieson, Robert, and A. R. Fausset. 1997. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. 1987. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. 1996. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol. 7. 10 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Neusner, Jacob. 2011. *The Babylonia Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Vol. 8. 22 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- . 2011. *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Vol. 16. 22 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Oswalt, John N. 1986. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Smith, James E. 1995. *The Book of History, Old Testament Survey Series*. Joplin, MO: College Press.
- Utley, Bob. 2001. *Isaiah: The Prophet and His Day (1-39), Study Guide Commentary Series*. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.