

# OT 501--Old Testament Introduction

## Lecture Notes—Isaiah (“First Isaiah”)

### I. Who Was Isaiah?

--From the Priestly/Royal Family?

--A Jewish tradition makes Isaiah a relative of King Uzziah. If not a relative, Isaiah was certainly close to the royal family, as his ready access to them shows.

--Family:

--Married to a prophetess (8:3) [This could be simply “prophet’s wife.”]

--Sons

--*Shear-Jashub* (“A remnant shall return”—7:3) This name is a word of promise for the time following judgment, although the negative word of the certainty of judgment and defeat was also inherent in the name. At least a remnant would survive the judgment.

--*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* (“Speed Spoil, Hasten Prey”—8:3) This is a word of judgment, specifically military defeat.

### II. Where Did He Preach?

--Jerusalem, at least we see him in Jerusalem.

### III. When Did He Preach?

--740 BC, “Year of Uzziah’s death”—He may have preached prior to this time, but his commissioning comes at this time (Isaiah 6).

--734-732 BC, Syro-Ephraimitic War (Isaiah 7-8) Isaiah advised Ahaz to trust God in the face of his enemies, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Aram, after they attacked him for refusing to join them in a rebellion against Assyria. Ahaz did not heed Isaiah’s word, rather he called upon Assyria’s king Tiglath-Pileser III for help, which did come. Damascus was destroyed and Israel reduced to vassal status.

--701 BC, Sennacherib Crisis (Isaiah 36-37) Isaiah advised Hezekiah during the siege by Sennacherib, following a revolt against Assyrian rule by Hezekiah and other area kings. Hezekiah did listen to Isaiah and was blessed by God.

### IV. The Structure of The Book of Isaiah

--1. Isaiah 1-39

--Audience

--Judah and Jerusalem in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Isaiah preached a message of coming judgment for the sins of Judah.

--Themes

-- A remnant would return and a “messianic” leader would lead them, but judgment for sin is the primary issue in much of this section. A primary thrust of the text is to trust in the Lord rather than ritual, human strength, or foreign powers.

--Historical References

--Isaiah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Sennacherib

--2. Isaiah 40-55—*Deutero-Isaiah*

--Audience

--Judah in exile.

--Themes

--Comfort and encouragement for an exiled people. Deliverance and redemption would eventually come for them, but for now they needed to trust in the Lord.

--Historical References

--Cyrus, the “Lord’s anointed=messiah”

--3. Isaiah 56-66—*Trito-Isaiah*

--Audience

--A people once again settled in Judah, apparently after the exile, although many of the references are ambiguous concerning context.

--Themes

--Chastising, calling to obedience for sin, even the sin of idolatry. Condemnation of sin and future judgment for failure to repent. A major point of contention was failure to keep the Sabbath.

--Historical References

--none

## V. Authorship

--Scholarly consensus for over 100 years has argued for at least two or three, and sometimes more, authors in the Book of Isaiah. They recognize the change in setting and theme, but they must ignore the linguistic continuity between the sections and the canonical attestation of Isaianic authorship.

--Many conservative scholars would argue that Isaiah of the 8<sup>th</sup> century wrote the entire book from a prophetic viewpoint. This view recognizes the continuity between the sections and allows for the current canonicity of the entire book, but sometimes it does discount the apparent multiple settings of the texts.<sup>1</sup>

--The student should note that something of a middle ground is possible. Even if Isaiah did write the entire book of Isaiah, or at least major sections throughout, some [perhaps extensive] editing likely took place as the work of Isaiah was used throughout the centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> See John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2 vol., New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, 1998), for a cogent, critical defense of Isaianic authorship.

This editorial work would have produced literary works for particular times and would account for the differences in setting, without losing Isaianic authorship throughout.

## V. The Message of the Book of Isaiah

### --God's Holiness

1. Isaiah 6:1-10—Isaiah's response is to the holiness of God, and in comparison his own unholiness & unworthiness. (cf. Is. 55)
2. "Holy One of Israel"—25 out of 31 uses of the phrase are in Isaiah.
  - God is holy, completely other, the only holy God.
  - God has chosen Israel as His own people.

### --God as Redeemer (Isaiah 49:7)

- The Holy One will deliver and redeem his people.

### --Israel's Sin & Coming Judgment

1. Isaiah 1:2-3, 18-20
  - There is "no knowledge" (cf. Hosea). He raised and cared for His people, but now they did not know Him. They did not even have the sense of the donkey and ox to recognize its owner & provider.
2. Isaiah 5:1-7 --"The Song of the Vineyard"
  - God did everything for the vineyard (Israel) in order to expect good fruit ("justice" and "righteousness"), but they put forth wickedness instead. Therefore God would allow the vineyard to be destroyed. So for the vineyard (Israel) to survive, the people must show justice & righteousness.
  - Note that God did the work, all the people had to do was walk in the work that God had already completed.
  - Jesus alluded to this in Mt. 21:33.
3. "Justice & Righteousness"
  - Isaiah 1:21—Justice and righteousness are necessary.
  - Isaiah 9:6-7—The Messiah (although the term itself is not used here, the concept of a messianic ruler is present) will rule with justice and righteousness in contrast to the rulers of the present day.
  - Isaiah 11:1-5

### --Need to Trust in Yahweh

1. Isaiah 7 (esp. vv. 1, 3, 9b, 14)—Isaiah's message during the Syro-Ephraimite War was the Ahaz and Judah needed to trust in Yahweh, *Emmanuel*, "God with us." If they would trust in Him they would be delivered.
2. Isaiah 40:1-2, 28-31—The exiled Israelites needed to trust in Yahweh for their deliverance and redemption. He had not forgotten them and would strengthen them.

--**“The Servant of the Lord”**

1. 42:1-4—The “Spirit” is upon Him. He is a messianic figure who will establish justice (cf. Is. 9 & 11).

2. 49:1-6—The servant appears to be “Israel,” but he will also “bring Jacob back.” This suggests a possible fluid understanding, or even a dual understanding of the servant, perhaps as the nation and then as a prophet or messianic figure representing Israel.

3. 50:4-9—“Suffering” servant, but not with an atoning quality as in Isaiah 53. This could be seen as the prophet or even as Israel, except when juxtaposed with Isaiah 53.

4. 52:13-53:12—In this passage the servant suffers to atone for the sins of the people, thus presenting a suffering messiah. Many parts of this passage are applied to Jesus in the NT.

[5. 61:1-3]—This may be a 5<sup>th</sup> “Servant Song.” It contains many of the same themes as the other songs. Jesus quotes the passage as a basis for His own ministry in Luke 4.