

Outline of Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is the first of the so-called “major prophets” because of its size. The others are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. There are 12 “minor prophets” after Daniel in the OT.

Unfortunately, one of the first issues that comes up in studies of Isaiah has to do with authorship. Did one real prophet Isaiah write the book, or were there two or even three authors whose works were combined at a later date? One can read pages and pages on this subject but it boils down to this simple question: do you believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scripture? If so, then this data will suffice to show you the unity of the book of Isaiah:

NT Reference	Isaiah Quotation	NT Reference	Isaiah Quotation
Matt. 1:22	Isa. 7:14	John 1:23	Isa. 40:3
Matt. 3:3	Isa. 40:3	John 12:38	Isa. 53:1
Matt. 4:14	Isa. 9:1-2	John 12:39	Isa. 6:9-10
Matt. 8:17	Isa. 53:4	Acts 8:28, 30, 32-33	Isa. 53:7-8
Matt. 12:17	Isa. 42:1-4	Acts 28:25	Isa. 6:9-10
Matt 13:14	Isa. 6:9-10	Rom. 9:27, 29	Isa. 10:22-23, 28:22, 1:9
Matt. 15:7	Isa. 29:13	Rom. 10:16	Isa. 53:1
Mark 7:6	Isa. 29:13	Rom. 10:20	Isa. 65:1
Luke 3:4	Isa. 40:3-5	Rom. 15:12	Isa. 11:1, 10
Luke 4:17	Isa. 48:8-9	Matt. 21:4	Isa. 62:11

Since the NT quotes from Isaiah chapters 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 28, 29, 40, 42, 48, 53, 62, and 65 and ascribes all of these to Isaiah, we can be certain that Isaiah wrote the book! Of course, even easier would be to just look in the book of Isaiah itself, where his name is used 16 times.

It is often noted that there is a major division in the book at chapters 39/40, and since the whole book has 66 chapters, 39 before the division and 27 after, the book mirrors the structure of the whole Bible which has 66 books, 39 in OT, 27 in NT. The first section seems to focus on judgment and the second on redemption, deliverance, and blessing. The following from R. Bruce Compton (Course Outline, 106 Bible Exposition, Isaiah, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 1998) gives a high-level overview of the book, which we will develop at further length as we proceed in the study of Isaiah’s prophecy.

- I. BOOK OF JUDGMENT 1–39
 - A. Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem 1–12
 - B. Oracles of judgment against the nations 13–23
 - C. Prophecies of world-wide judgment and deliverance 24–27
 - D. Oracles of woe against Samaria, Jerusalem, and Assyria 28–33
 - E. Prophecies of world-wide judgment and deliverance 34–35
 - F. Historical interlude and transition 36–39

- II. BOOK OF COMFORT 40–66
 - A. Prophecies of redemption and restoration 40–48
 - B. Prophecies involving God’s Servant the Messiah 49–55
 - C. Prophecies of condemnation and consummation 56–66

One concept that is important to understand in Isaiah is that of the ‘oracle’ or ‘burden.’ It signifies a ‘pronouncement’ and is prophetic of events that will certainly occur. It is used 11 times in chapters 13-23 (and 3 other times in the book) where there are a total of 14 prophecies against the peoples of various geographical regions. The same word is used for a load that may be borne on an ox or other beast of burden. You can see how a prophetic oracle would be a heavy load, not only for the prophet, but for the recipients to bear. For instance, ‘the burden of Babylon’ in 13:1 can be translated ‘the pronouncement or prophecy concerning or against Babylon.’ Of similar import is the word ‘woe’ which occurs 21 times in the book. We ought to be able to see from this that the Bible is not always full of good news!

Historical Background

Assyrian Kings

1. Tiglath Pileser III, 745 – 727 B.C.
 Conqueror of ANE; forced tribute on Israel under Menahem (2 Kings 15:19ff). Israel and Syria united against Tiglath to throw off his rule; Ahaz of Judah would not go along with their union so they turned against him (2 Kings 15:37; 16:5; Isa. 7:1). Ahaz did not trust the Lord at this juncture but turned to Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:7-9).
2. Shalmaneser V, 727 – 722 B.C., son of Tiglath.
 At the succession of Shalmaneser, many states that were subjugated under his father revolted; he therefore had to re-establish dominance over them. By 722 B.C., he had defeated Samaria, deported its population, and re-populated it with loyal subjects. Thus the northern kingdom was destroyed (2 Kings 17:1-23).
3. Sargon II, 722 – 705 B.C.
 Again revolts had to be put down; Egypt was conquered. Hezekiah declared independence from Assyria but later was forced to change his mind.
4. Sennacherib – 705 – 681 B.C.
 Babylon, Judah, and Egypt revolted. Hezekiah joined with Egypt (Isa. 30-31). Jerusalem was miraculously spared seeming certain defeat (Isa. 37:36).
5. Esar-haddon – 681– 668 B.C.

The Book of Judgment

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| I. | Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem | 1–12 |
| A. | Court case against Judah and Jerusalem | 1:1-31 |
| B. | Millennial blessing | 2:1-4 |
| C. | Judgment against Judah..... | 2:5-4:1 |
| D. | Millennial blessing | 4:2-4:6 |
| E. | Judgment against Judah..... | 5:1-30 |
| F. | Isaiah’s commissioning (740 B.C.) | 6:1-13 |
| G. | Near-term deliverance from Syria and Israel | 7:1-8:22 |

H.	Prophecy of the Messiah's first coming	9:1-7
I.	Judgment against Israel and Assyria	9:8-10:34
J.	Prophecy of the Messiah's second coming	11:1-12:6
II.	Oracles of judgment against the nations	13–23
A.	Against Babylon.....	13:1-14:27
B.	Against Philistia	14:28-32
C.	Against Moab	15:1-16:14
D.	Against Damascus (Syria) and Israel	17:1-14
E.	Against Ethiopia.....	18:1-7
F.	Against Egypt.....	19:1-25
G.	Against Egypt and Ethiopia.....	20:1-6
H.	Against Babylon.....	21:1-10
I.	Against Edom.....	21:11-12
K.	Against Arabia.....	21:13-17
L.	Against Judah (Jerusalem)	22:1-14
M.	Against Shebna.....	22:15-25
N.	Against Tyre.....	23:1-18
III.	Prophecies of world-wide judgment and deliverance	24–27
<p>This section reflects judgments on the whole world in the tribulation and the blessing in the Millennial Kingdom. See Revelation 6-19, 20-22 for greater detail. The judgment on the world topically belongs with the previous section but since it is chronologically farther in the future, it fits well with this section.</p>		
A.	Judgment against the World.....	24:1-23
B.	Praise to God for His deliverance	25:1-26:19
C.	Judgment against the world.....	26:20-27:13
IV.	Oracles of woe against Samaria, Jerusalem, and Assyria	28–33
A.	Against Samaria (Ephraim).....	28:1-13
B.	Against Judah (Jerusalem)	28:14-32:20
C.	Against Assyria	33:1-24
V.	Prophecies of world-wide judgment and deliverance	34–35
A.	Judgment against the world.....	34:1-17
B.	Millennial blessing	35:1-10
VI.	Historical interlude and transition	36–39
A.	The invasion and defeat of Assyria (Sennacherib).....	36:1-37:38
B.	The sickness and recovery of Hezekiah	38:1-39:8

The Book of Comfort

I. Prophecies of redemption and restoration.....	40–48
A. Comfort from the Almighty God	40:1-41:29
B. The Servant of the LORD	42:1-25
C. The superiority of God, Israel’s redeemer, to Idols	43:1-44:28
D. Deliverance from captivity.....	45:1-25
E. Judgment against Babylon	46:1-47:15
F. The stubbornness of Israel and their deliverance	48:1-22
II. Prophecies involving God’s Servant the Messiah	49–55
A. The Servant and Restoration	49:1-26
B. The suffering Servant.....	50:1-11
C. Deliverance to Zion.....	51:1-52:12
D. The suffering and glory of the servant	52:13-53:12
E. Restoration of Israel	54:1-17
F. Call to repentance and blessing.....	55:1-13
III. Prophecies of condemnation and consummation.....	56–66
A. Promises to the just	56:1-8
B. Condemnation of the wicked.....	56:9-57:21
C. Proper observance of the law	58:1-14
D. Iniquities of Israel.....	59:1-21
E. Glory of Zion.....	60:1-62:12
F. Judgment of God	63:1-6
G. Prayer for Deliverance	63:7-64:12
H. Condemnation and Deliverance	65:1-66:24

Notes

The Sennacherib Prism is A 15-inch tall, six-sided baked clay prism from ancient Assyria contains the story of the invasion of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The prism was found at Nineveh.

King Sennacherib of Assyria is mentioned in 2 Kings 18-19. Isaiah prophesied that God would protect Jerusalem against attack by Sennacherib (Is. 36-37, 2 Chron. 32). While the prism does say that the Assyrians trapped Hezekiah in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage,” like the biblical record, it says nothing of them conquering the city.

The Bible says that God spared Jerusalem. The prism, together with the Lachish reliefs and excavations, adds detail to the biblical account. King Hezekiah prayed to the Lord. Isaiah brought him God’ s message. That night the Lord smote 185,000 Assyrians, and Sennacherib went back to Nineveh and later was killed by his sons (Isaiah 37:35-38).

See <http://www.myfortress.org/archaeology.html>. Also, Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Revised and Expanded, Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.