

# OpenTheo

## Isaiah - Introduction (Part 2): Authorship



### Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah, one of the greatest literary productions of the Old Testament, contains a range of prophecies attributed to God's revelation to man. Despite being authored by a single author, there are certain debates surrounding the authorship of some chapters of the book. While some scholars argue that Isaiah authored all the chapters, others have attributed some chapters to Trito Isaiah. However, the traditional authorship of the book is accepted by conservative scholars, who have also found unique vocabulary words and coincidences that support the idea of a single authorship.

## Transcript

We're going to continue with and complete our introduction to the book of Isaiah, which uses the same notes we were working from yesterday. We just did not finish them. And the main thing we need to consider, and then we'll be ready to get into the book itself, is the question of the authorship of the book of Isaiah.

There's very little question that the first part of the book was written by a man named Isaiah, who lived in Jerusalem in the 8th century B.C., and prophesied at least during the times of Hezekiah, and he says three kings earlier, Isaiah, Jotham, and Ahaz, as well as Hezekiah. Very few critics have ever questioned this with reference to the first 39 chapters. Although there are a few chapters, like chapter 13, which talk about the fall of Babylon, that some critics have suggested might have been written by another author later.

The main objection here is that the prophecy is too specific. In other words, it's too correct. That Isaiah, in the later chapters, after chapter 39, predicts things that no man could predict, things that no man could know.

Now, we who are of the more conservative bent believe that God inspired Isaiah, and God knows. God knew what he was going to do, God knew what was going to happen, and therefore he could reveal it to his prophets. In fact, that's kind of a fundamental assumption we make about prophecy, is it's not the man, it's God revealing to the man.

Therefore, prophecies, if they're genuine, are not limited to the limits of a human's

ability to know something, but rather limited only to what the limits are of God's knowledge, which would seemingly be limitless. So, that God could inspire a man to predict the future is not a problem for those who accept, basically as a starting point, the realistic view that God can do supernatural things through people, and certainly prediction of the future is supernatural. In fact, in Isaiah chapter 41, God mentions this element of prediction as the very mark of genuineness of his prophets.

In Isaiah 41, Isaiah is challenging the false gods and their representatives, the false prophets who spoke on their behalf, because Israel and Judah at that time had a syncretic religion mixture, serving Yahweh, that's Israel's God, but also serving pagan gods. They had compromised in the area of idolatry, and so within Judah, nobody was denying that Yahweh was God, but they also accepted other gods. Of course, this was unacceptable.

God had said at Mount Sinai, you shall have no other gods before me. The word before me doesn't mean ahead of me, it means in my presence. You shall have no other gods in my presence, before me.

You live your life before me, and as you live your life before me, there should be no other gods there, is what he meant. Israel compromised on this a great deal, and the prophets often called them on that, took them to task for it, and so does Isaiah. In Isaiah 41, 21, he says, present your case, says Yahweh the Lord.

Bring forth your strong reasons, says the king of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen. Let them show the former things what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare to us things to come.

Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. In other words, the challenge to the false gods that Yahweh places is, well, if you really are a god, you should be able to tell the future. Tell us the things that are going to come in the future, so we'll know that you really are gods.

Or he even taunts them, or even tell us things from the past, if you can do that. The gods, the pagan gods were made of stone and wood, they couldn't tell the past or the future. They couldn't tell what was going on right in front of them, because they were mindless.

But the point is that being able to tell the past wouldn't prove that you're a god, but it would at least prove that you've got breath in you, and the idols didn't. But God seems to imply that if you can tell the future accurately, you've shown that you've got credentials as God. Now, that's exactly the thing that God used to credential those who are genuine prophets.

He is God, he does know the future, he can tell what will happen, and he can tell his

prophets, and they can tell others. And it was this ability to tell the future that is God's own stamp of divine origin for the writings of the book of Isaiah. And yet it's that very feature that has caused skeptics who don't believe in the supernatural to say, Isaiah couldn't have possibly written those chapters because they contain accurate, predictive prophecy.

And this mood against Isaiah arose in the late 19th century, especially in German seminaries, places like Tübingen, which has produced a vast number of liberal scholars and authors. And the mood shifted out or spread out until it permeated most of biblical scholarship, including many people who call themselves evangelicals or conservative Christians. The idea is this, that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, living in the 8th century BC, probably wrote all or most of the first 39 chapters, but he couldn't have written chapter 40 through 66.

Why? Well, there's a number of reasons for saying so. None of them are good from the standpoint of someone who believes in the supernatural, but they are nonetheless presented. One is that the setting, they say, of these later chapters is not Palestinian, but Babylonian.

Now, Isaiah never went to Babylon. Isaiah lived 100 years before the Babylonian exile. He lived in Judah as far as we know his entire life.

Yet the standpoint of chapters 40 through 46, the author's standpoint, they say, is from the standpoint of Babylon, of an exile. It is, of course, true that the subject matter of those chapters, to a large extent, is that of God delivering his people from Babylon, a condition into which they had not yet fallen in Isaiah's day. And therefore, critical scholars say, well, the author seems to be in Babylon, therefore these chapters must have been written by an exile at a later date than Isaiah's day.

Now, more than that, the prophecies in Isaiah chapter 44 and 45 especially mention that God will use a man named Cyrus to restore the Jews from their captivity, to send them back to Jerusalem, and so they can rebuild Jerusalem the temple. This, of course, did happen in 539 BC, but that was, once again, that was 200 years after Isaiah's time. Isaiah's ministry began in 740 BC.

The fulfillment Cyrus's activities were 200 years later, 539 or 538, some would say, BC, mostly 539. Now, that would mean that Isaiah named this man Cyrus, not just talking about generically some guy, but actually mentioned Cyrus by name. 200 years before Cyrus did the thing predicted, and 150 years before the man was even born.

So, they say that couldn't happen, you know. You can't have someone given the name of somebody and exactly what they're going to do 200 years before it happens, so that must have been written later by an exile who lived after Cyrus came. Cyrus was the king of Persia who conquered Babylon, and he did issue a decree shortly thereafter allowing

the Jewish people and all captive peoples to go back to their ancestral homes and resume life as it had been before the Babylonians had 70 years earlier taken everyone into captivity.

So, Cyrus did exactly what Isaiah said he would do, and the skeptics say, well, there's no way that could have been predicted with such accuracy by somebody writing 200 years before that time. And then, it is also pointed out that in chapters 40 through 66, the author never mentions his own name. The name Isaiah does not appear in those chapters, though it does in the earlier chapters a number of times.

Lots of times, Isaiah mentions himself by name in the first 39 chapters, but he doesn't mention himself by name in chapter 40 through 66. So, they say, therefore, we are not obligated to assign them to Isaiah. I mean, if he did call himself Isaiah in those chapters and we said it wasn't really him, we'd say the guy was lying, but he doesn't claim that he's Isaiah.

They say the distinction between the first 39 chapters and the last 27 chapters is so great that we are justified in seeing it as an entirely different literary composition by an anonymous author who does not tell us he's Isaiah or doesn't tell us he's anybody. He just wrote and didn't indicate who he was. So, on this view, Isaiah, the historical character that we're familiar with from the earlier chapters and also from the books of 2 Kings and Chronicles, that Isaiah did write the first book, what we call the book of judgment, but the book of comfort, chapters 40 through 66, were not written by him and no one knows who they were written by.

They were written by some much later Jew living at least 200 years later than Isaiah's time, who did not let us know who he was, but his writings somehow in the years following were wrongfully and accidentally combined with the writings of the actual Isaiah so that later generations mistook those chapters as having belonged to the same book. So what we're really talking about here is what scholars call the unity of the book of Isaiah. Is it one book or two or multiple? You see, it started out with scholars claiming that chapter 50 was not written by Isaiah.

That's where it started. J.B. Cope in 1780 questioned the Isaianic authorship of chapter 50. In 1789, Duderlein denied Isaianic authorship of chapters 40 through 66, which is a common position taken now by scholars.

His denial was followed by other scholars and in the 1800s divided between those who held this view and those who supported the traditional view. At the end of the 1800s, in 1892, Bernard Duhme believed 2nd Isaiah wrote chapters 40 through 55 and Trito or 3rd Isaiah was the author of chapters 56 through 66. So we've got now three Isaiahs.

Now when they say Duderlein and Trito Isaiah or 2nd and 3rd Isaiah, they don't mean that those authors really were named Isaiah. It means that these are authors whose real

names we don't know, but their writings can be attached to the book of Isaiah, so we don't know what to call them except 2nd and 3rd Isaiah, quote unquote. They're not really Isaiah.

They're other men, but we don't know what to call them. So the scholars began to call them Duderlein Isaiah, which is 2nd Isaiah, or Trito Isaiah, that's 3rd Isaiah. And sometimes chapter 13 was thought to be written by Trito Isaiah also.

Since then, liberal critics have sought to find other passages to additional Isaiahs. And so it goes on and on. It's sort of what ended up happening to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

Someone first suggested that Moses didn't write all of it, then they found two different traditions, allegedly two different sources, and then it multiplied until now most scholars who are not conservative believe that the Pentateuch was written or came into existence from four different streams of tradition that eventually were merged together in the 6th century BC, and that none of it was written by Moses. Now these are very common views for what we would call liberal scholars. Liberal scholars, generally speaking, have a naturalistic worldview.

That means they don't believe in the supernatural, and they try to explain away any report of miracles, or anything like genuine predictive prophecy, which itself is a miracle. If somebody can tell you what's going to happen next week, or 100 years from now, or 300 years, or 2,000 years from now, and can give it accurately, that's a miracle, because no one really knows those things except God. So it's an act of God.

And that's what we believe is the case with the book of Isaiah. The liberal scholars, because of their worldview, come with a de facto denial of any possibility that Isaiah could have written real, genuine, predictive prophecy. So they have to come up with later authors who wrote those chapters.

Now I wouldn't even bring this up. To my mind, it is such a vacuous argument. It is such a valueless argument, that I wouldn't even bring it up, except for the fact that it has become standard belief in the academy, if you go to seminary.

And this is even probably true if you would go to a more or less evangelical seminary. Now there are still very conservative scholars who accept the traditional authorship of Isaiah. I believe they are right.

I think the traditional authorship is correct, and I'll give you the reasons why I think so. But I've been surprised by even scholars who are known to be straight-laced evangelicals writing about Isaiah, hedging on whether Isaiah wrote those later chapters. Sometimes I've seen evangelical writers say, when they're referring to something in the latter part of Isaiah, they say, the author of Isaiah 43, or the author of Isaiah 57 or

something, wrote this.

Obviously they don't say Isaiah wrote it, it's the author of, because they don't want to commit themselves. Why? Not because there's not good reason to believe Isaiah wrote it, but because it's become unpopular in the academy. There are moods and vogues and fads in scholarship as there are in clothing styles and music.

And scholars soon learn what side of the bread the butter is on, and what will get them respect in the academy, and what will not get them respect in the academy. And one thing that will not get you respect in the theological academy is to believe the traditional view of the unity of the book of Isaiah, that God inspired the entire book through one man. That is the position I take, though, and I believe there's no reason to be ashamed of it.

I believe the evidence is overwhelmingly in its favor. And the only evidence against it is the presupposition that predictive prophecy is impossible, which is not a presupposition any open-minded person can make. You see, it's interesting, the atheists and the naturalists and the persons who deny inspiration, who deny miraculous, they may say that fundamentalists are too closed-minded, but actually we're the ones who are open-minded.

We're open to the possibility of supernatural things. They're not. What reason have they got not to be open to it? Nothing but prejudice, certainly.

No one can point to any evidence from the scientific world or from any other academic community that would prove there is no supernatural. If you talk to people who don't believe in the supernatural, you say, well, why don't you? They always inevitably say the same thing. I've never seen a miracle.

Well, so what? There are many things I haven't seen that exist. There are people who've seen things I've never seen. I never saw the Revolutionary War.

I was born too late, but lots of people saw it. It's in the history books. I've never seen the rings of Saturn.

I've seen pictures of them, but who knows? Maybe they were photoshopped. You never know. I trust they exist, though, because there are people who have seen them through telescopes and things.

I mean, there's lots of things that people have seen that I haven't seen. To say I've never seen a miracle, well, join the club. Most of us have never seen a miracle.

What's that have anything to do with reality? Since when did your experience become the end-all authority on what exists? There is a God. Certainly there's no sane argument against that. And if there's a God, who's to say what he can and cannot do? In fact, it'd

be surprising if he didn't do things that we can't do.

It'd be surprising if there were no miracles if there is a God who's interested in things on Earth. So, I mean, it's mere prejudice. That fuels the skeptical opinion on this.

It's not like we're too sophisticated. We've learned too much to believe in miracles. Really, what have you learned that has made it impossible to believe in miracles? List everything you've learned, and I can acknowledge the truth of everything you've learned and say that still doesn't mean there's no miracles.

Because nothing man has learned has ever suggested by some logical necessity that there's no miracles. So, to believe in miracles is simply to remain open-minded. To take the skeptical approach is simply to become closed-minded and governed by narrow prejudice.

And that's, I don't mind telling them, so that's what they need to have pointed out to them. You see, when you talk to an atheist, they think they have the high ground. They're the modern intellectuals.

Well, they've only become what they are by deciding without evidence that they won't accept a certain category of consideration of reality. It's an arbitrary prejudice. And those of us who don't like to be closed-minded, those of us who actually like to consider all the evidence, can look at the book of Isaiah and say, you know, it looks to me like he wrote the whole thing.

And I'd like to show you the evidence I'm considering. First of all, I think I mentioned at the end of our lecture yesterday that the Jewish religion has always assumed the unity of the book of Isaiah. It never suggested at all that there were two different books that got combined here.

Now, and this goes back some centuries, even before Christ, this was the Jewish opinion. Now, according to the skeptical scholars, the combination of the books may have occurred any time after the 6th century B.C. or, you know, about that time. And we don't have, you know, Jewish opinion recorded for us at that early date.

But we do have the book of Ecclesiasticus, which should not be confused with the biblical book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is a book that we believe was written by Solomon. Ecclesiasticus was another book.

It's an apocryphal book. The Catholics have it in their Bible, but Protestants generally don't. It's a very ancient Jewish book.

Not as ancient as the Old Testament, however. It was written between 200 and 180 B.C. So still a couple hundred years before Christ, but also a couple hundred years after Malachi. But still early.

And it basically bears witness to Jewish thought at that particular early date. And it's the earliest known statement about Isaiah's authorship outside the book itself. And it attributes the second section to the same author as the first section, which simply means that two centuries before Christ, which is a lot closer to the time the book of Isaiah was written than we are, the Jews at that point saw no reason to doubt that Isaiah had written the whole book.

But that's just getting started. The Dead Sea Scrolls are an interesting testimony to this, because they were written around the time of Christ. And the Dead Sea Scrolls contain books of the Old Testament.

Almost all the books of the Old Testament are in the Dead Sea Scrolls. And there's many copies of Isaiah that have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. But what's interesting is when scholars found the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s, they already had this critical opinion about Isaiah that it was written by two authors.

So they thought they would find in the Dead Sea Scrolls a scroll that contained Isaiah chapters 1 through 39, and a separate scroll that contained Isaiah chapters 40 through 66, as if it was a different book by a different author, preserved separately. What they found, in fact, when they opened the Isaiah Scroll was that Isaiah 39 ended two lines before the bottom of a page. And chapter 40 began at the bottom of the page, and they had the first two lines of chapter 40 at the bottom of the page before it continued to the next page.

Now, they would have thought that with Isaiah 39 ending so close to the bottom of the page, it would have been a convenient thing to just start chapter 40 at the top of the next page, especially if they didn't consider it to be all one document. But that chapter 40 ran right off from chapter 39 at the bottom of the page. It gave the evidence that the authors, whoever wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, were of the opinion, they were Jewish people, they were of the opinion that it was one book.

It never occurred to them to think of it as two documents. So at least as early as Ecclesiasticus, two centuries before Christ, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in the time of Christ, that takes us back 2,000 years before our own time, Jews seemed to have no doubt that Isaiah was the author of the whole book. And Christian scholarship has always held that too up until the 1800s.

It was only with the post-Enlightenment age of rationalism and naturalistic worldview and so forth becoming predominant in Western culture that these various theories against Isaiah and other books of the Bible really took hold among the scholars. But not for excellent reasons, but only because of the mood of the age, the anti-supernatural mood of the age. But you can see that the Jews believed in the unity of Isaiah, and so did Jesus.



Now for a Christian, of course, that should be all that's necessary to know. If Jesus believed in the unity of Isaiah, case closed. And he did.

The New Testament quotes Isaiah by name 20 times. Now it quotes Isaiah many more times without mentioning his name. For example, say as it was written in the prophet, and it'll quote Isaiah without mentioning Isaiah by name.

But 20 times it mentions him by name in the quotes. In Matthew, he is quoted by name six times. Three times from the first 39 chapters, and three times from the latter portion.

In other words, Matthew quotes Isaiah three times from what we call the book of judgment, and three times from the book of comfort, each case saying it's Isaiah that he's quoting, obviously having no clue that there were two authors of this material. Look at John chapter 12. This is an interesting case that conservative scholars often bring up, because John quotes twice from Isaiah in two successive verses of John 12.

John 12, 38, John says that the word of Isaiah, the prophet, might be fulfilled which he spoke. Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Now this quote comes from Isaiah 53, one, which obviously is in what we call the book of comfort in Isaiah. Next verse, therefore they could not believe because Isaiah said again, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn and be, I should heal them.

That's Isaiah 6. So, in the space of two successive verses, John quotes twice from Isaiah. Both times he says it was Isaiah. In fact, the second time he says Isaiah said again, emphasizing this is not second or triddle Isaiah speaking.

This is the same Isaiah. Isaiah spoke in Isaiah 53, and again we read what he said in chapter 6. In other words, John not only assumed, but affirmed that Isaiah was the speaker in both cases or the writer in both cases. So, I mean the New Testament testimony on this is quite obvious.

Now, besides the New Testament's testimony, there is the kind of evidence that scholars ought to be considering whether they believed in the testimony of the New Testament or not, as they look at the book of Isaiah. One of the important things about Isaiah is that there are 25 vocabulary words, 25 Hebrew words or forms, that are unique to Isaiah. That is, they're not found in any book of the Bible except Isaiah.

There's 39 books of our Old Testament. In 38 of them, none of these words occur. But they occur in the book of Isaiah, and they occur in both sections.

That is to say, they seem to be in an un-Isaianic vocabulary, since they're not used by any other Old Testament author. And yet, all 25 of these words are found in both sections, as if the vocabulary of one man is found in both places. There are certain

themes that recur in Isaiah, and the ones that are specific to Isaiah often occur in both sections.

For example, the reference to unquenchable fire as an image of God's judgment on Jerusalem. Unquenchable fire. The term is used many times in Isaiah, I believe, but it's found in both sections.

Chapter 1, verse 31. Chapter 66, verse 24 being examples. The idea of the nation being sick and requiring healing is introduced in chapter 1 and repeated a number of times in the book of Isaiah.

The healing of the nation from this sickness is mentioned in Isaiah 53, verses 4 and 5, the second section of the book. All Gentile nations flowing into the holy mountain is an image Isaiah uses a number of places. It's found in chapter 2, verse 2. It's found in chapter 56, verse 7. It's found in 66, verse 20.

This imagery is in both sections of the book. These images are in addition to the 25 vocabulary words we referred to that are found in both sections of the book and are not found elsewhere. References to God's highway, a motif fairly common in Isaiah and not in other books of the Bible.

It's found in Isaiah 11, for example, verse 16. In chapter 40, at the beginning of the book of Comfort, for example, in chapter, in the second section, 40, verses 3 through 5. Other places too, but just these are examples that it's found on both sides of the divide in the book of Isaiah. The idea that the wolf will lie down with the lamb and the lion will eat straw, et cetera, this famous image that most people apply to the millennium, I think wrongly, but this image is found twice in the Bible.

It's found in Isaiah 11. It's found in Isaiah 65. It's not found anywhere else.

Obviously, it's found in both sections as if the same author has written them. It doesn't have to be that the same author wrote them. It's just, it's at least interesting coincidence, but in view of the fact that the book has traditionally been understood to be all by one author, it doesn't seem to be supporting evidences.

The idea that there's a banner that God raises up to the nations to draw them to him is found in chapter 11, verse 12, also in chapter 49, 22, and 62, 10, obviously the first and the second sections. Now, there is therefore internal evidence from language and typical expressions that would support the default notion that Isaiah is the author, and there's no reason to believe otherwise. The idea that the author was in Babylon is a mistake.

First of all, even if the author spoke as if he was in Babylon, it would not mean that he was because the prophets were carried in vision to various places. John on the island of Patmos was caught up in the spirit to heaven. On another occasion, he was taken to a valley, a wilderness, where he saw a woman riding on a beast.

Other times, he was in Jerusalem measuring the temple, yet he was on the island of Patmos the whole time. The prophet in his vision is taken to various locations and speaks from that vantage point as he is caught up in the vision and he's part of the vision himself. Ezekiel, while in Babylon, felt himself caught up by the hair and carried to Jerusalem.

He described things he saw in Jerusalem, though the man was in Babylon. Even if Isaiah was in Jerusalem, he might readily have visions that carried him forward to the exile where he speaks as one in Babylon when he is not in Babylon. That's not unusual for prophets.

Therefore, if the author seemed to be speaking as if he was in Babylon, it would not necessarily convey the idea that he was, in fact, physically in Babylon. But there are reasons to believe that the author doesn't even sound like he's in Babylon. For example, in Isaiah 43 and verse 14, we find the expression, Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the host of Israel, For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives.

Send to Babylon. If the writer was in Babylon, he would seem to be talking about sending from Babylon. His vantage point does not appear to be in Babylon, but talking about sending to Babylon from wherever he is.

Also, Cyrus, in chapter 46 and verse 11, is said to come from the east. Chapter 46, verse 11, it says, God is calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes my counsel from a far country. He's talking about Cyrus.

All scholars agree in the context. Indeed, I have spoken. I will bring it to pass.

Cyrus from the east? Well, from Jerusalem's standpoint, Persia was east. But from Babylon's standpoint, it would not be from the east. If the author was in Babylon talking about the Persian coming, he would not talk about a man coming from the east.

If he's in Jerusalem, he would refer to Cyrus as being from the east. So it sounds like a Jerusalem venue that the author is writing from. Likewise, in chapter 52 and verse 11, it says, depart, depart, go out from there.

Touch no unclean thing. This is talking about people going out from Babylon, going back to Jerusalem. Go out from there? He doesn't say go out from here.

If the vantage point was in Babylon, God would have said go out from here and go to Judah from Babylon. But since he's talking about going out of Babylon, he says go out from there, it sounds like he's talking about Babylon is not here. It's there.

It's somewhere else than where the standpoint of the author is. These are vague, but they seem to suggest that the author is writing from a Jerusalem or Palestinian vantage

point. Not from the standpoint of Babylon.

Now, there's one other really important consideration. And that is that if the skeptical view about this is in fact correct, then the greatest chapters in the Old Testament, as far as literary production goes, which are acknowledged by almost all scholars to be the last 27 chapters of Isaiah, and there's poetry in the entire world, not to say just in the whole Bible, is found in these chapters. Those chapters were clearly written by one of the greatest literary geniuses of Israel's history.

Yet, we're asked to believe that his name was forgotten, that his book was preserved, but anonymously. The Jews who received these prophecies or these poems from this author never bothered to remember who he was. It's like England not remembering who Shakespeare was or something.

It's like one of the greatest talents that the nation's ever produced, and his work is preserved without a name, without an identity. This is particularly a peculiar suggestion in view of the fact that much lesser men had their books preserved and their names were remembered. Obadiah.

Obadiah wrote a book that doesn't even get so far as a chapter two, and he didn't even write anything about Israel. He wrote about the fall of Edom. I mean, certainly a prophecy of lesser significance than those found in the latter part of Isaiah, and yet the author's name is remembered.

I mean, the Jews, generally speaking, did not preserve writings of prophets anonymously because it was important to know who wrote them. It was important to know the credentials of the man who wrote. It was not like the Jews to keep prophecies and not have the stamp of the author on it so we'd know that this was indeed a true messenger of God.

So to suggest that, you know, the Jews received a second book by a second author who wrote a lot like Isaiah, but they couldn't remember what the guy's name was, and so they just stuck it onto Isaiah's book, is to postulate a scenario that's hard to follow. It's hard to really accept that this is something that could have happened. At least I would have a hard time accepting it.

Of course, the skeptic has a hard time accepting another view because of his prejudices, but again, if we don't adopt such prejudices, we can just take things at face value. Certainly, it is interesting that Isaiah doesn't mention himself any longer after chapter 39, but it's not so important. He's not writing even about his own times there.

What happens in the Book of Comfort is he's shifted to another subject. In the first 39 chapters, the time frame is what we call the Assyrian threat. The Assyrians were the enemy.

The Assyrians were threatening Judah. When you come to chapters 40 through 66, the Assyrian threat is the Thessalonian problem 100 years later. The Persians, 200 years later.

In other words, Isaiah is writing about things that pertain to his own time in the first 39 chapters. His name comes up a great deal when he's talking about contemporary events related to his own time. When he shifts to a time that's 100 and 200 years later, he doesn't mention himself.

He's out of view. He's looking at a later generation of Jews, descendants of his and his contemporaries, who will be in a different situation than he and his contemporaries know. It's interesting how the book transitions, too.

As I mentioned, the last four chapters of the Book of Judgment, that is the last four chapters leading up to chapter 39, chapters 36, 37, 38, and 39, they are what we can call a historical interlude. They're the only part of Isaiah that really just are telling historical stories, like the books of Kings and Chronicles. In fact, the material in Isaiah 36 through 39 is parallel to and almost verbatim the same as similar stories in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

It's the story about how Sennacherib sent Rabshika to besiege Jerusalem. Hezekiah was the king in Jerusalem at the time. Hezekiah was being influenced by political opinions of parties that wanted him to seek help from Egypt, and others wanted him to actually sign a treaty with Assyria and go with Assyria.

But Isaiah was saying, don't do either of those things. Just trust Yahweh, and Yahweh will deliver you. Hezekiah was pulled very strongly different ways, and he finally went Isaiah's way, and he did trust in Yahweh.

That was when God sent an angel out and struck 185,000 of the Assyrian troops that were encamped around Jerusalem, and that ended the siege and ended the Assyrian threat. This is recorded in those chapters. But then there's another chapter or two, which is talking about a later time in Hezekiah's life.

Hezekiah got sick. Isaiah came and told him, you're going to die. Get your house in order, and left.

Hezekiah interceded for himself. He prayed and asked God for mercy and said, please remember all the good things I've done and extend my life. One of his concerns may have been that if he had died at that time, he would die childless, and it would seemingly end the royal line of David at that point, because Hezekiah had no child at that time.

In response to his prayer, God sent Isaiah back to him and said, okay, I'm giving you 15 more years. His life was extended 15 years. Now, Isaiah's history that he tells doesn't go into the history that 2 Kings does on this.

Actually, three years after he was healed, Hezekiah had a son named Manasseh. And, of course, 12 years after that, Hezekiah died, and his son at 12 years old became king and became the worst king ever. Sometimes it might be better to do things God's way.

There's God's perfect will, and then there's what God will sometimes permit. And he responded to Hezekiah's prayer, but it was not good for the nation. It would have been better for the nation for the good king to die childless and God to find someone else to replace him, perhaps a brother or something.

This did happen in later generations of David's line, that a brother would take the throne when vacated by his brother rather than a father-son succession or an uncle. But the point is that Hezekiah was healed of his disease, and Isaiah chapter 39 records how that after he was healed, emissaries from Babylon came to congratulate him for his healing. Apparently, his sickness was notorious and known worldwide.

It must have been a serious threat to life, but he recovered. Babylonian emissaries came and congratulated him, and he showed them his treasures and so forth. After they were gone, Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and said, what did you show these men? He said, well, I haven't withheld anything from them.

I showed them everything I have, all my treasures, everything. And Isaiah said, well, the time's going to come, not in your day, but in the day of your children, that the Babylonians are going to come and take all that stuff away. Now, what's interesting about that is that although this historical section, Isaiah, pertains to the Assyrian threat, it closes with an allusion to the Babylonian invasion.

So that the book of judgment ends with a prediction of the Babylonian captivity. And then chapter 40 through 66 is more or less set in that venue, that historical milieu of the Babylonian exile and of God's rescuing Israel from there. So it's interesting how it transitions from the first part of the book to the second.

That historical interlude is like the connecting link between the earlier chapters and the later ones. And the first part of that historical interlude deals with the Assyrian threat and how God delivered them from that. And the second part ends with the fact that there will be another problem.

The Babylonians will give you trouble in the future. And although that didn't happen until 100 years later and their deliverance almost 200 years later, yet that's the subject matter that is the focus of the later chapters of the book. Now, this is, we just picked up what we failed to finish yesterday in the introduction of Isaiah.

I'm going to do something that will grieve you very much and that is end the session early. But don't worry, there's two more hours today. So you don't have to go through withdrawal.

We'll just have a shorter class here because we've picked up that material about the authorship and unity of the book. But we will actually start studying the book of Isaiah in the next class.