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Introduction to Isaiah



Isaiah: A Topical Look At Isaiah - Steve Gregg

In this introduction to the biblical book of Isaiah, Steve Gregg provides an overview of the prophet's unique position in Israelite history and some of the major themes and sections of his writings. Gregg notes that while some scholars debate the authorship and structure of the book, its message of judgment and comfort has resonated with readers and believers for centuries. While encouraging listeners to read along with assigned passages, Gregg also highlights some of the key themes and ideas that recur throughout Isaiah, including the promise of a Messianic Age and the importance of trusting in God's ultimate plan.

Transcript

In turning to the book of Isaiah, we're going to be studying the first of the prophets that we come to in this course. He was not the first chronologically of the prophets, even of those whose books are in our Bible, but he is arranged first in the canon of scripture for a number of reasons perhaps, but certainly it would be justified if only on the basis of his importance, because I don't suppose there's any other prophet in the Bible who is as important as the prophet Isaiah. And I would say this not only as my own personal and subjective judgment, but based upon the opinion of the apostles as well, because judging from the amount of quotations that the New Testament has from the book of Isaiah, we would have to say that the apostles shared my conviction that Isaiah is the most important book to a New Testament Christian, that is the most important prophetic book.

Now that is not in any sense to diminish the value of the other prophets. Frankly, I think they're all wonderful. It's just that Isaiah is the most wonderful in my own judgment, and the only book of the Old Testament that is quoted more frequently than Isaiah by the New Testament writers is the Psalms.

Psalms is the first in rank as far as number of times quoted in the New Testament. Isaiah comes second. Isaiah has the most chapters of any Old Testament book other than Psalms, certainly has the most chapters of any prophetic book, but that can be a little deceiving because some of the chapters are short.

When it comes to actual pages occupied, it's about the same length as Ezekiel, and it's actually a little shorter than Jeremiah. Jeremiah has more pages, but fewer chapters, only 52 chapters. But that, of course, is because of the length of the chapters.

So it's not exactly the longest of the prophetic books, but it ranks high among the books, even in that sense. We need to understand just a little bit about who a prophet was in biblical times. The kings of Israel were not supposed to be like other kings of other nations.

They were ruling under God. Israel was, like no other nation on the planet, a theocracy, which means ruled by God. All other nations were monarchies ruled by a king.

Now, Israel was also a monarchy in that they had a king after a certain point, after the time of Samuel. Israel had kings, but those kings were still supposed to be subject to the overall king of the Jews, who is God. And therefore, Israel stood among the nations as a unique theocracy.

And though there were kings who held political office, they were subject to God, and therefore to the prophets of God, who were the ones who communicated what God wanted to the kings. Most of the kings had prophets on their staff, on their cabinet. David had Nathan and Gad, for example, as prophets that were spoken of as... Well, Gad, in particular, is spoken of as David's seer.

And Nathan, I don't know if he's so described, but we know that he came and gave the word of the Lord to David on many occasions. And that's saying something, because David himself was a prophet. But still as king, he received the word of the Lord through other prophets who were either on staff, or at least officially recognized by him as having something important to say about how he should govern, and what God expected of him.

After David's time, two generations after David's time, the kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms. The ten northern tribes formed their own confederacy, and they retained the name Israel, since the bulk of the tribes of Israel were in that confederacy to the north. But Judah and Benjamin, who were the southern tribes, maintained their own individual identity as a nation, and that nation was called Judah, because Benjamin was so small and insignificant that Judah was definitely the dominant tribe in that coalition.

So we had, in the days of Rehoboam, two generations after David, two kingdoms of God's people. Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. The kings of Judah were all descendants of David.

There was never a king in Judah who was not descended from David. The kings of Israel were of various descent. There was not a dynasty in the northern kingdom that lasted more than four generations, and many of them lasted only one, or sometimes only a year or less, because of assassinations and so forth that took place, and coups.

But most of the kings of Israel were wicked, and did not appreciate the prophets. But they were still subject to the prophets, whether they acknowledged it or not. Kings like Ahab, who married Jezebel, persecuted the prophets of God.

Other kings were somewhat more appreciative of the prophets of God. David, for example, seems to have been. Hezekiah, who was a good king, was at the time of Isaiah, and Isaiah was the principal prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah.

When you study the books of Kings, you'll know a lot about Hezekiah, because he stands out among the kings of Judah as one of the few who was a godly king. There were other prophets contemporary with Isaiah. It would appear that Amos may have been contemporary maybe a bit earlier, but Amos' ministry was to the northern kingdom of Israel.

In Judah, where Isaiah was, there was Micah, who was contemporary with Isaiah. In fact, Micah even has a chapter that's almost identical in some respects with one in Isaiah. They either were acquainted with each other or influenced by one another, and almost certainly Isaiah was the older man and Micah was the younger prophet in the same area, except that Micah was in the country of Judea and Isaiah apparently lived in Jerusalem.

In fact, Isaiah seemed to have been of the royal family. Though he was not positioned properly ever to be a king, it would appear that his father, and we're told that he is the son of Amoz, not to be confused with the prophet Amos, not the same man, but Amoz was the brother of Amaziah, who was a previous king a generation earlier. And therefore, it would appear that Isaiah was first cousin to King Uzziah, and it was at the death of King Uzziah that Isaiah was commissioned to be a prophet.

He was also related to the other kings. He prophesied during the reign of several kings. All of them, of course, would have been increasingly remote relatives of his because they were all descended from each other, but he was first cousin of Uzziah.

And that being so, we know that he had access to the palace. Even if he had not been a prophet, he was well connected by bloodline. He was not, as far as we know, directly involved in politics, though he did definitely give political advice to the king, and he gave the king the word of the Lord.

Isaiah was an incredible man. Not only was he, in my opinion, the greatest of the class of the prophets, although maybe the Jews would put Elijah in that position, as far as the writing prophets go, there certainly doesn't seem to be one who would be ranked quite equal with Isaiah in the loftiness of his vision and how much of Christ and of Christ's kingdom he saw and predicted. He was more than a prophet, though.

As Jesus said about John the Baptist, what did you go out to see, a prophet? Yeah, and

more than a prophet. Well, John the Baptist was more than a prophet. Isaiah was also more than a prophet.

He was also an historian. If you look over at Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, to be exact, we read of some of the historical works written by the prophet Isaiah. He wrote some books that have unfortunately not survived.

I say unfortunately, I guess in the providence of God they didn't, so maybe we don't need them, but I would be, out of curiosity, interested in seeing them. In 2 Chronicles, chapter 26, and verse 22, and these two pages of my Bible are stuck together, so the only two pages of my Bible that are stuck are the ones I want to look at. Okay, here we go.

2 Chronicles, 26, verse 22, says, Now the rest of the Acts of Uzziah, from the first to the last, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, wrote. So apparently this prophet, same prophet, wrote a life of Uzziah, who was his first cousin. Okay, also he wrote another historical work, apparently, in 2 Chronicles, 32, 2 Chronicles, chapter 32, and verse 32.

It says, Now the rest of the Acts of Hezekiah and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the book of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. Well, there is in fact some historical information in the book of Isaiah about Hezekiah, but it's not likely that that's what's referred to here as the rest of the Acts of Hezekiah are written in the book of Isaiah. More likely, Isaiah wrote a more extensive work on Hezekiah that has not survived, which means that he wrote prophecy, probably the most important book of prophecy in the whole Bible, as well as some important histories.

He was a man of letters. He was no doubt very well educated. He was probably of noble birth, as I said.

He seemed to be probably the chief citizen of Jerusalem in his day. He was a godly man. And besides his abilities as a prophet and historian, he's also very gifted as a poet.

We judge this from, of course, the book of Isaiah, his prophetic book, but most of it is written in poetry. And experts on classical poetry have often said that the poetry in Isaiah, in many places, exceeds that of the great poets of other cultures. It has been said that the poetry of Isaiah surpasses that of Homer and Milton and Shakespeare, which are all, of course, very important classical poets.

But Isaiah's poetry is the greatest of all by most people's judgment. Now, of course, we are not as acquainted with Hebrew poetry as with, say, English poetry, although we're becoming acquainted with it, studying the books of Psalms, and we'll certainly see that most of the prophets wrote the bulk of their visions in poetic form, Isaiah being no exception. But he seems to be the chief poet as well as prophet among them.

Furthermore, as I indicated, he was also a statesman, not so much a politician but a counselor to several kings. He gives their names for us in chapter 1 and verse 1. The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Four kings he counseled.

We know nothing about the days of Jotham, what he may have said at that time, but we do know that in the year that Uzziah died, he had a vision that is counted to be his commissioning as a prophet, and in the days of Ahaz, certain things are recorded as taking place in chapter 7, for example, and beyond, and in the days of Hezekiah. Now, let me talk to you a little bit about the times and the political situation in Isaiah's day, because it is in his role as a prophet statesman that he was able to save his nation from destruction. He lived at a time of crisis where the very life of Judah was in the balances and almost perished, but because of his godly counsel to Hezekiah, and because of Hezekiah, though waffling a bit initially, finally going with the counsel of the prophet, God spared the nation, and their history was extended another hundred years.

So that whole century, from Hezekiah's time on, really, the land of Judah owes in part to Isaiah's counsel, because through the counsel of Isaiah, Hezekiah made the right decision, and in so doing preserved the life of the nation for another hundred years. In the days of Isaiah, the principal kingdom in the world, you know, the world empire at the time, was no longer Israel. In the days of David, David had ruled over probably the most important empire on the planet, but as David's descendants did not please the Lord, God allowed them to be delivered over to more and more enemy oppression and so forth, and in the days of Isaiah, which I better give you some dates so you know what days those were, from about 745 to 695, approximately, from about 745 to 695 BC, as you can see that covers almost exactly 50 years.

During that time, the ascendant pagan power was Assyria, and it is the case with most of the earlier chapters of Isaiah that Assyria is very prominent, the threat of Assyria. Almost 20 years into Isaiah's ministry, or maybe even almost 25 years into his ministry, Assyria attacked the northern kingdom of Israel. Now, Isaiah was in the southern kingdom, but Assyria conquered the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, which capital was called Samaria, in the year 722, which as you can see was maybe approximately 23 years into Isaiah's ministry, almost halfway through, right about the middle of Isaiah's career, the northern kingdom, Israel, fell to the Assyrians, and this was under the king of Assyria whose name was Tiglath-Pileser.

The northern kingdom of Israel and Syria, before this time, came against Judah, and this is one of the first crises that Isaiah speaks to. Before the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, Israel, the northern kingdom, and its small neighbor Syria, not to be confused with Assyria, Assyria was a great empire, Syria was a small nation like Israel. The small nation of Syria, along with Israel, were threatened by the expansion of Assyria.

They were quite concerned that Assyria might come and defeat them, and they knew that they were no match for this great power. So they decided that it would be advantageous to have three nations against Assyria, Confederate. Those three nations were to be Israel, Syria, and Judah.

This was in the days when Ahaz was king of Judah. However, Ahaz was not favorable to the idea. Ahaz didn't want to join them against Assyria.

He was more inclined to submit to Assyria, to pay tribute to Samaria. He didn't want to get the Assyrians mad at him by joining with two resisting nations, so Ahaz said, no, I'm not joining you guys. Well, Israel and Syria didn't want to take no for an answer from Judah.

They realized that the two nations together were not strong enough to withstand Assyria, but they thought they might be strong enough to withstand Judah, to conquer Judah and put a man in power who would do things their way and join the Confederacy with them. So the idea was, in Isaiah's day, the two smaller nations, Israel and Syria, were trying to force Judah to enter an alliance with them against Assyria. Now, Isaiah came to Ahaz during that time and said, attaboy, resist, don't submit, don't go with this Confederacy.

God is going to be on our side. If you trust him, then you won't have to join with these people against Assyria. Well, Ahaz was resisting for his own reasons, and he was not a good king.

He was not necessarily submitting to Isaiah's counsel, but he just, for his own selfish reasons, did the thing that Isaiah wanted him to do for other reasons. But Syria and Israel came down to besiege Jerusalem, to conquer it, so that they could have their way with it. And this was a terrifying prospect for Ahaz, the king of Judah, because they were going to replace him with somebody they liked better, who was referred to as the son of Tabeal, about whom we know nothing, except that his father's name.

What Isaiah told Ahaz was, don't be intimidated by these people, because within a very short time, as it turned out, it was only a few years, both the kings of Israel and Syria will be dead. These kings that are menacing you now, these kings that are trying to intimidate you now, just continue resisting, and in a few years' time, they'll be dead, and there'll be no problem to you. And sure enough, that happened.

Later on, as I said, in 722 BC, the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians. About 20 years later, the Assyrians in 701 BC, that's about 20 years after they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, in 701 BC, the Assyrians came down to also do the same thing to Judah. They managed to conquer virtually all the villages and towns of Judah, and the only bulwark against the aggression that had not fallen was the capital city itself, Jerusalem.

Its walls were fairly impregnable, but the Assyrians encamped around the walls of Jerusalem, intending to starve them out and to force them to submit and so forth, and offering them terms of surrender. And this was at a much later date than the days of Ahaz. As I say, it was 701, not 722 BC, and therefore, there was another king in Judah at this time, and that was Hezekiah.

Now, when Assyria was besieging Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, there were two political camps, two parties in Jerusalem, that had different opinions as to what should be done in this crisis. It was a terrible crisis, because the Assyrians were known to be ruthless people. I mean, there was no Geneva Convention in those days.

There was nothing to restrict the cruelty of winners of wars. And the Assyrians were known to be horrible. They'd impale people by the thousands when they conquered their cities.

They'd skin them alive. They'd put hooks through their noses and their lips and drag them off naked into captivity. They were really horrible with people.

And to have Assyria at your gate was a terrifying thing. And those who were counseling Hezekiah inside the city generally held two different opinions. One was that he should submit to the Assyrians.

Ahaz had done this 20 years earlier, and the Assyrians had left him alone for a bit. But now, the new king of Assyria was, you know, it was questionable whether he'd accept this. But there were some in the city saying, if you submit to the Assyrians, maybe they'll be nice to us.

Maybe we can pay them off. This was what we could call the pro-Assyrian party in Jerusalem. There was another party, apparently very vocal in Jerusalem at this time, who were saying, no way, we don't want to submit to the Assyrians, but what we need to do is send messengers down to Egypt.

The only country that is of comparable size to Assyria and might be able to stop them and pay Egypt to come up and bring their armies and to join us and to help us overthrow the Assyrian siege. And this was apparently a prominent opinion in Jerusalem at the time, because there are several chapters in Isaiah where Isaiah rebukes these people who are saying, go down to Egypt for help. Of course, Isaiah was against both parties.

He was not for the Assyrian party nor for the pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem. He was for the pro-Jehovah party. His name, Isaiah, itself means the salvation of Jehovah or the deliverance of Jehovah.

And Isaiah said, listen, don't go down to Egypt for help. Don't submit to the Assyrians. Just turn to God.

Just rest in the Lord. Just trust in God and he will save you. Well, Hezekiah was pulled various directions by his counselors, but he finally decided to go with Isaiah's counsel.

And so he just called on the Lord and just prayed and said he's just going to trust God in this situation. And what happened was that God sent an angel one night to kill 185,000 of the Assyrians that were besieged outside Jerusalem. And the next morning when the few survivors awoke and realized that 185,000 of their men had died in one night through some mysterious means, they were spooked to the point that they withdrew and left and never came back.

So Jerusalem was spared. If Hezekiah had trusted in the Egyptians or in the Assyrians, Isaiah indicated that that would be the doom of the nation. And Jerusalem would have fallen just like Samaria had earlier and that would be the end of both nations at the hands of Assyria.

But because Hezekiah followed Isaiah's counsel, God delivered, God saved. And this was through Isaiah's counsel. And therefore, we can say that Isaiah was at least indirectly or very strongly influential in saving his nation.

And they didn't fall until about 100 years later to the Babylonians. OK, now that is the historical setting of the book of Isaiah. Now, as far as the book itself, I like there's several things I want to say about it.

When you deal with a book this large, it's easy to fail to see the forest for the trees. I mean, when you go through something like this verse by verse, this is true also of Psalms or of Genesis or any other real large book of the Bible, it's easy to look at the small details but forget what was in the other parts. It's hard to really get the big picture unless you stand back and in your own mind you can divide it into manageable segments.

And Isaiah is a book better than most for this purpose of dividing into manageable segments. For one thing, all parties recognize, all scholars have always recognized a very clear division into two major segments that Isaiah falls into. The first 39 chapters we'll call segment number one, chapters one through 39.

And then the second segment is the rest of it, which is from chapter 40 through chapter 66, segment two. Now, this division is so fundamental, so universally acknowledged that it has even been suggested that two different authors wrote these segments. I do not give any credence to that.

We'll talk about the theories on that further down the line here. But let me just say that there is such a difference between segment one, which is the first 39 chapters, and segment two, which is chapters 40 through 66, that it has even occasioned speculation that there may have been different authors. Now, I don't think any evangelical can give

credit at all for a moment to this suggestion that there's different authors for reasons that we'll look at in a moment.

But the subject matter is certainly different. Because throughout the first 39 chapters, the enemy in view is almost always Assyria. It's quite clear that the setting of the first 39 chapters is that of the Assyrian period, the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah when the Assyrians were menacing both Israel and Judah.

And that is clearly the setting of the first 39 chapters. And one of the reasons that people have suggested a later author to chapters 40 through 66 is because the enemy there is a different enemy, Babylon. Now, the Babylonian period was considerably later than Isaiah's time.

After Assyria fell, which it eventually did, Babylon ascended to the position that Assyria had once held in the ancient world. Babylon began swallowing up all the lesser kingdoms around and became a world empire. And it's clear, I mean, it's stated outright in chapters 40 through 66 of Isaiah that Babylon is the great enemy, the great oppressor, the great captive maker of the Jews.

And we know from Jewish history that a time considerably later than Isaiah's time, about 100 years later, when Babylon had risen to power, the Babylonians did conquer Jerusalem and took them into captivity for 70 years. And it's evident when you turn to chapter 40 and the chapters following it in Isaiah that it is with reference to this Babylonian captivity and particularly the return from that captivity that these chapters are dealing. And so it's entirely different.

This is one distinction that is very pronounced between the two segments of Isaiah. The first segment clearly deals with the Assyrian period. The second segment deals with the Babylonian period.

One thing that has been observed, and I have a hard time seeing how this is significant, though it's definitely intriguing, is that the two segments of Isaiah correspond very much to the two basic divisions of the Bible, as we know, the Old and the New Testament. Here's how the correspondence is sometimes pointed out. The first segment of Isaiah has 39 chapters.

The first portion of the Bible, which we call the Old Testament, has 39 books. The second segment of Isaiah has 27 chapters. The second division of the Bible, which we call the New Testament, has 27 books.

So 39 and 27 chapters in Isaiah, books in the Bible. Total of 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah, 66 books in the Bible. Now, beyond that, it's also clear that the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are largely about judgment and God's complaints with His people, His anger with them for their violation of His law.

But the last 27 chapters is of a different tone. It's about salvation. It's got graphic depictions of the Messiah.

Some of the most graphic ones in the entire Old Testament are found in this latter section of Isaiah. It's got many words of comfort. In fact, the first words in chapter 40, the second segment of Isaiah, begins with the words, Comfort, comfort ye my people.

And so this second section of Isaiah, which we've been calling the second segment at this point, is sometimes referred to as the book of comfort. And the first section called the book of judgment. Now, something else intriguing to me about this is that the book of comfort, which is what we're calling the last 27 chapters of Isaiah, the book of comfort begins with the prophecy about John the Baptist.

In Isaiah 40, verses 3 through 5. It begins with the prophecy of John the Baptist, as does the New Testament itself. And the book of comfort ends in chapters 65 and 66 with the description of the new heavens and the new earth, as does the New Testament. The center chapter of the book of comfort, the one in the exact middle of those 27, is Isaiah 53, which most of you will immediately recognize is the most graphic depiction of the sufferings of Christ in the Bible.

That is, in the Old Testament. It's right in the middle, it's the direct center of the book of comfort, Isaiah 53. So, now I said it's hard to say, you know, I mean, it almost sounds like that's got to be significant.

You know, I mean, the resemblance is so amazing. I mean, you've got the judgment in the first 39 chapters resembling the Old Testament, and the book of comfort and salvation in the last 27 chapters, which resembles the subject matter of the New Testament, the latter beginning with the prophecy of John the Baptist, ending with the prophecy of the new heavens and the new earth, and at the right smack dab in the middle of it, the picture of Christ crucified. All these things seem like they must be more than coincidental, but the reason I hesitate to ascribe too much significance to them is simply that the chapter divisions are not inspired, as far as we know.

I mean, the chapter divisions were not an original part of the book of Isaiah or of any other book of the Bible. The original writers didn't divide into chapters. However, the chapter divisions are somewhat natural.

Well, I mean, when it came to some writer putting in the chapter divisions, we might wish to postulate that he was an inspired writer acting under inspiration, but that would be, I mean, we don't really have any grounds for saying that. But he did put the chapter divisions in somewhat natural places where they might be expected to fall, and that being so, we could say that the book itself is written in 66 segments, later recognized as chapters and corresponding to the books of the Bible. If this is significant, what it seems to do is endorse the present canon of Scripture, because when Isaiah wrote this,

certainly none of the New Testament books were written, and many of the Old Testament books were not yet written, and therefore Isaiah couldn't have calculated, you know, to write his book in this way so as to resemble the Old and the New Testament, which he would not have been at all familiar with.

He wouldn't have had access to. It would have been more or less as if God was making the book of Isaiah a type of the eventual canon of Scripture itself. Now, this goes beyond anything that the Bible authorizes us to call a type, and I only say it because the evidence is so remarkable.

But I don't know that we can really assign this significance to it, but I find it fascinating. Now, even 39 chapters is a big chunk, and you might say, well, I could never become very intimately acquainted with a book that large. Well, you certainly can.

And one thing that will help, excuse me, is dividing these major sections into subsections as well. And so for a moment, let's consider the first 39 chapters of the book of Judgment. This segment divides quite naturally into seven parts of unequal length.

The first six chapters are one part. They are quite clearly, from internal evidence, prophecies against Israel, the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom of Israel.

It had not yet fallen when he wrote these chapters, so they must be written in the first part of his ministry. Since that kingdom fell about 23 years into his 50-year ministry. But that kingdom was still around in the early stages, and much of what his early prophecies talk about have to do with it, especially chapters 1 through 6. We could call those, I'm sorry, I got that wrong, you better scratch that.

Those chapters are about Judah, but the next six chapters are about Israel. I apologize. Chapters 1 through 6 are prophecies against Judah.

The next six chapters, up through 12, 7 through 12, are against Israel. What I said about Israel still standing and so forth, obviously is still valid. I've just got those two sections mixed up.

So, chapters 1 through 6, prophecies against Judah. 7 through 12, prophecies against Israel. Those are the first two of the seven subdivisions of this section.

The third part would be chapters 13 through 23, 11 chapters. 13 through 23. These make up a very clear segment in that they contain, all of them, burdens against the nations.

This is the word that is used, the burden against Babylon, the burden against Tyre, the burden against Philistia, the burden against Moab, the burden against Ammon, the burden against the desert of the sea, and so forth. Virtually all of these chapters, with the exception of one of them, are burdens against Gentile nations. The one that's an

exception is chapter 22, which is against Jerusalem itself.

But it is stuck in the midst of a treatment, of a section about Gentile nations, perhaps to show that Jerusalem is just as bad as the Gentile nations, and it deserves treatment along with the rest of them. But chapters 13 through 23, we would call that section the burdens, because virtually all of them begin with the expression, the burden of the Lord against so-and-so. And they are burdens against the nations, apart from Israel, but of course Judah is mentioned in chapter 22.

The fourth segment would be chapters 24 through 27. Four chapters. The subject matter here is about the transition from the Old Order to the New Order.

Now, I'm purposefully being a little vague about this, because different opinions accrue as to what we're talking about by orders here. The Old Order and the New Order could refer to the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, in which case the transition is at the first coming of Christ, followed by the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Old Covenant. That is, in fact, my opinion about the interpretation of those chapters, but there are many, probably far more, who believe that the Old Order would mean the present world, and the New Order would be the world to come after Jesus returns.

So, regardless of... we're talking about a crux here. Something ends, something else begins. There's a hinge there, between the two.

The division of opinion would be as to, is that hinge the first coming of Christ, where the Old Jewish Order was replaced by the New Covenant Order, or is that hinge the second coming of Christ, where the present material natural world, fallen world, is replaced by an unfallen new heavens and new earth? Virtually everyone interprets that pivot, that crux, as being a coming of Christ, either the first or the second. And it would seem that most commentators I'm acquainted with think it's the second coming, and they see it as the end of the natural fallen world, replaced by a new heavens and new earth. I will give my reasons at the time, but I personally believe it's a reference to the first coming of Christ, the end of the Old Order, that is, Judaism, replaced by the New Order, the New Covenant age.

In any case, we can say that chapters 24 through 27 unmistakably talk about the transfer from the Old Order to the New Order, the transition. Then, the fifth segment, we will call the woes. Chapters 28 through 33.

Chapters 28 through 33 are justly called the woes, because all of those chapters except one begin with the word woe. There are six chapters in that section, and five of those six begin with the word woe, which seems to be a good reason to call those the woe chapters. And rightly so, you'll see when we get to them.

That's chapters 28 through 33. Much of the subject matter there is woe unto the

counselors of Hezekiah who are telling him to go trust in Egypt. That's largely the section where Isaiah is pointing to the need to trust God alone for deliverance.

There's much in that section that harks beyond the time of Hezekiah to the New Testament age and the coming of the Messianic kingdom, but the setting of these woes is the conflict between Isaiah's counsel and that of other counselors that Hezekiah was hearing who wanted him to go down to Egypt. The sixth segment is like the fourth. We could call it the transition from the Old Order to the New Order.

It's only two chapters, chapter 34 and 35, but they are a distinct unit. Chapter 34 definitely describes the fall of the Old Order. Chapter 35, the institution of a New Order.

And once again, the interpretation hinges on the very same issues as I said about chapter 4. Some people think the Old Order is the present world to be replaced at the second coming of Christ with a new world or even by a millennial earth. Others, myself included, believe the Old Order is Judaism, the New Order is the New Covenant, and that transition took place at the cross and its effects were sealed when Jerusalem was destroyed. So anyway, there's going to be a difference of opinion when we come to those chapters.

Those are chapters 34 and 35, the transition from the Old Order to the New Order, essentially the same label I give to this fourth segment. It's an important subject to Isaiah. Then the final, the seventh segment of the Book of Judgment is chapters 36 through 39, which is again four chapters, 36 through 39.

Now this, some people would call the historical interlude. It doesn't so much contain written prophecies of Isaiah as just historical information. It's almost verbatim, like some of the chapters out of Kings or Chronicles.

It talks about Hezekiah's illness. It talks about the sun going backward and so forth. Some of the information, actually the information in these chapters is almost verbatim identical to corresponding chapters in the Books of Kings.

It's like a duplication of it. Now the significance of this historical interlude, chapters 36 through 39, would seem to be that it sort of closes the period of which the earlier chapters had been concerned, with which they had been concerned, and introduces the Book of Comfort and the period that it deals with. You'll remember that I said chapters 1 through 39, the setting is during the Assyrian period, whereas the Book of Comfort is concerned more with the Babylonian period.

Well, it's interesting, of these four historical chapters, 36 through 39, the first two deal with Assyria as the problem, and the latter two with Babylon as the problem. The first two of them, 36 and 37, are about the siege of Jerusalem and how Isaiah counseled the king to trust God, and the angel of the Lord smote 185,000 Assyrians. And that's what

chapters 36 and 37 are, the Assyrians at the gate.

But chapters 38 and 39 are about Hezekiah's illness and how he was miraculously healed of his disease, and some Babylonian emissaries came to congratulate him, and he showed off all the treasures of Jerusalem to these emissaries. And when they were gone, Isaiah said, well, what did you show these men from Babylon? He said, I showed them everything, didn't withhold anything. And Isaiah said to them, the time will come, not in your days, but in the days of your sons, of your descendants, when the Babylonians will come and take everything out of here.

He predicted the Babylonian period, which makes the historical chapter about this a fitting introduction to the next section, which is set in the Babylonian captivity. So this seventh part of the Book of Judgment is a historical interlude that serves as a transition from the Assyrian scenario to the Babylonian scenario. And that completes our dissection of the Book of Judgment, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah.

Before I go on to do the same kind of thing with this Book of Comfort, does anyone need any repeat on any of that? Do you need any chapter numbers or anything like that? Got it all in your notes? Okay. Let's go on then to the second segment of Isaiah, which is, as I said, called the Book of Comfort, beginning with the words, comfort ye, comfort ye my people. This does not divide into seven sections, but it does divide into three.

And these three sections are symmetrical. They are of equal length. Each of these three subdivisions is nine chapters long.

The first one is chapters 40 through 48. This segment is largely about Cyrus, who was the Persian conqueror who conquered Babylon and gave the Jews permission to go home. They had been in captivity in Babylon for 70 years.

The Persians conquered Babylon. Cyrus was the king of Persia. He gave permission to the Jews and other expatriates to go back to their own homelands.

And this allowed the Jews to go back and rebuild the temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar years earlier. Now, Cyrus was the hero, though there's a sense in which he's sort of a type of Christ, who's the deliverer of his people in a spiritual sense. But chapters 40 through 48 are principally about Cyrus and the deliverance from Babylon.

The second portion of the Book of Covenant is chapters 49 through 57. Again, nine chapters long. And those are mostly about another deliverer, who is called the Servant of Jehovah.

And that is the Messiah, for the most part. The subject of the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah is one about which many scholarly monographs have been written and it's a bit confusing. Because at at least one point in the narrative, Israel, the nation, is called the

Servant of Jehovah.

But it becomes very plain in some of the other passages that it's talking about the Messiah is the Servant of Jehovah. And the term Servant of Jehovah is used throughout this section. And so we'll just call it the Messiah Servant section.

The third and final division of the Book of Comfort is also nine chapters long. Chapters 58 through 66. We could call that the Golden Age or the consummation or the glorious kingdom of the Messiah.

I just call it the Golden Age. And that is, to my mind, about the Church Age. Our present age in which we live since the first coming of Christ.

Those of a contrary opinion would say, no, this is about the Millennial Kingdom after Jesus comes back. Once again, we'll have to consider the pros and cons of these different opinions when we come to the appropriate material. But it is the Golden Age.

Whether the Golden Age is the Church Age or whether it's a future Millennial Age is what we'll have to discuss. But there's no question that these chapters are about the Golden Age or the reign of the Messiah. Now, one might think that this is a little too neat a package to be genuine.

Some scholar must have thought up this clever little way of dividing it up into nine chapters, nine chapters, nine chapters. However, the book itself punctuates them. Because the first nine chapters end with the precise same statement that the second nine chapters end with.

40 through 48, that section ends with this verse, Isaiah 48, verse 22, which says, There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked. Now, if you take the next nine chapters, the second segment, which is, of course, chapters 49 through 57, and look at the last verse in chapter 57, which closes that section, it says, There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked. Very same verse, repeated verbatim.

It's as if that verse, repeated, punctuates the divisions between the intended sections. Once again, if that was not intentional, if that's not part of what the Holy Spirit intended for us to see in the division of the book, then it's a tremendous coincidence. Which it could be, but I don't think so.

Okay? Now you know something about the book of Isaiah in terms of what it's going to cover and where. What the segments are. I expect that you will be able to become very acquainted with the book.

If you just look at a big book with six chapters and say, Man, I could read this a hundred times and still not know which end is up. But if you recognize, well, the first six chapters are prophecies against Judah, the next six chapters are prophecies against Israel, the

next eleven chapters are prophecies against the nations, round about, and so forth, then these are manageable segments and you can actually become quite expert. Knowing where things are in Isaiah and what context they're in and so forth.

Now, there is one very important matter about the book of Isaiah that we have to talk about. It doesn't come up with our treatment of every book, but it must with Isaiah. As also when we discuss the Pentateuch.

There are certain problems that we have to discuss in terms of the Pentateuch and the book of Isaiah only because we live in an age of skepticism where biblical scholars are mostly liberals and mostly reject the inspiration of scripture and have novel theories about the authorship of scripture and so forth. You will, I hope, recall many months ago we discussed the authorship of the Pentateuch, the first five books. Of course, the Bible throughout assumes and even Jesus says that they're of Moses.

And Moses is the substantial author of that portion of scripture. But modern scholars of a more liberal bent than myself basically reject Moses authorship altogether. They don't believe he wrote any part of it.

They believe that the Pentateuch came about much later in time, centuries after Moses time. And it was the product of many centuries of oral transmission of conflicting sorts, eventually edited and compiled by somebody unknown to us and not very well done at that because it's pretty sloppy and self-contradictory according to them. Well, I still accept the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch without any apologies because Jesus accepted it.

And I figure if everyone stands against him, I'll stand with him and they can stand against me too. Same thing with Isaiah. Isaiah is another book that has been a special target for liberal Old Testament scholars to attack the authorship of.

Now, most scholars don't have a serious problem with the authorship of the first 39 chapters. What we have labeled the Book of Judgment. Most scholars are willing to attribute most of that or all of it to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who lived in the days of Hezekiah and so forth.

There are some parts of it that some scholars have problems with. For example, Isaiah 13 and 14, which are a prophecy about the fall of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians. Some scholars say, well, that part wasn't part of the original because that happened so much later than Isaiah's time.

They say there's no way he could have known of it. You see, their assumption right from the gate is that there's no such thing as divine inspiration. There's no such thing as God showing people the future.

Therefore, if a prophet has written very graphically and in detail and accurately about

events that happened much later than his own alleged time, they assume that he didn't really write it. He couldn't have known that. It must have been written by someone later after the event or else there's no accounting for how it could be so accurate.

That's exactly the mindset of these people. So, there are a few places in the first 39 chapters where Isaiah's authorship has been questioned. But for the most part, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are attributed to the man himself.

But the leading liberal scholars, and many evangelicals waffle on this too because there's such a unanimity among liberal scholarship on this, hold to the idea that Isaiah didn't write any of the last 27 chapters. From chapter 40 on, we have the work of an entirely different author. Now, let me tell you the reasons for saying so.

In the first 39 chapters, there are many references to Isaiah. It says, the vision which Isaiah the prophet saw, the word came to Isaiah, Isaiah this, Isaiah that. Isaiah mentions himself in the first 39 chapters.

But in chapters 40 through 66, there is no mention of Isaiah by name. Therefore, they feel there is the liberty to assume that those chapters might not have been written by him. At least, it's not like the scholars who say that Paul didn't write the books of Timothy and Titus, which books claim to be written by Paul.

You see, these people have said that their books are forgeries. But if chapters 40 through 66 of Isaiah don't claim to be written by Isaiah, if there is some reason to believe they might be part of originally a separate document that somehow got attached to the book of Isaiah, but the separate document was really written by someone else much later, then they can say, well, see, the document itself doesn't say anything about Isaiah. It's not claiming to be by Isaiah, so why should we claim that it was? Another reason that they say Isaiah didn't write it is because of the obvious historical setting presupposed in chapters 40 through 66.

I mentioned earlier that setting is the Babylonian exile. Well, Isaiah didn't live anywhere near the Babylonian exile. He was 100 years before that.

And because he was 100 years before it, it is thought that he could never have known anything about it. He certainly couldn't have written as if he were in exile, and that's what the writer does in chapters 40 through 66. In many of the chapters, it's quite obvious that the writer sees himself as a captive in Babylon at the time of Cyrus when Babylon falls to the Persians and the Jews are permitted to go back to Palestine and rebuild the temple and so forth.

The author is there, it would appear. And since Isaiah was not there at that time in history, the scholars say this can't have been written by Isaiah because he wasn't there. This happened 100 years after his time.

It must have been written by some exile or post-exile writing later than Isaiah's time. We don't know who it was because his name is not attached to the work, but it must have been a separate document written at a later date, somehow accidentally attached to the book of Isaiah and attributed to him. Now, let me just say by way of answer to that.

It is true that the author of chapters 40 through 66 does appear to be speaking as if he is in exile in Babylon, but this is not too surprising even if Isaiah did write it, and I accept that he did, because there is a phenomenon in almost all the prophets, which is called the prophetic perfect tense. Where the author, and you will find this in virtually all the books of the prophets, speaks in the past tense about something that hasn't even yet happened in his day. He sees something in vision so graphically that he sees it as if it is virtual reality, as if he is there.

And he is describing things around him as if he was really there because the vision is so graphic. So he describes what it is like in Babylon and about the freedom to leave and so forth, given by Cyrus and so forth, as if he is really there. Now, a scholar who doesn't accept the Isaianic authorship of these latter chapters would say that my explanation I just gave is a desperate attempt to salvage an indefensible theory of authorship.

They'd say, well, it's much more natural just to assume that the author is there because he talks like he is there. Why do you have to postulate this wild idea that he is only there in vision? Well, the reason is because he is Isaiah, and because Isaiah didn't live there, and therefore it's only practical and logical and reasonable to suggest that he did what all the prophets did. He, as it were in vision, was transported to a future time and described things as if he was there.

The other prophets did it. Why can't Isaiah have done it? You see, the real reason that liberals reject the Isaianic authorship of those last chapters is none of the above that I've just mentioned. In their heart of hearts, their real rationalization for rejecting Isaiah's authorship is that things are described so accurately from a later period of time.

I mean, Cyrus, who was not born until 150 years after Isaiah's time, Cyrus is mentioned by name. And his career and his significance and what he would decree and everything is spelled out 150 years before the guy was born. Now, that just can't happen.

Isaiah, living 150 years before Cyrus, couldn't have known about Cyrus, so he couldn't have written those chapters. That's what they figure. It's just too explicit.

And so they figure it must have been written by somebody in the days of Cyrus. And that would explain how they could know. Now, you can see that that reason for rejecting the Isaianic authorship of these chapters, which is the real reason why liberals reject it, is because they simply cannot allow there to be such a thing as the phenomenon of genuine predictive prophecy and revelations from God.

They just don't believe in God. Most of them are not even believers. Most liberal scholars, if you ask them, are agnostics.

They don't know if there's a God or not. They don't even care. They're just interested in the discipline of study of ancient documents that happen to have been written by Hebrews.

They are not Christians, and they don't believe in a supernatural God. And therefore, they don't believe in miracles, and so they rule out all the miracles of the Bible. They don't believe in inspiration, so they rule out all predictive prophecy in the Bible.

And in order to do that, they have to deal with some passages that are very embarrassing to their position. Like Isaiah in the days of Hezekiah, mentioning Cyrus by name and telling precisely what the man would do long before he was ever born and would do those things. And then he did them.

So it's easier for them to say, well, this had to be written by someone else. But they don't get fully out of the woods even by doing that. Because in Isaiah 53, there's a very graphic description of Jesus' death and his rejection at the hands of the Jews.

And no one suggests that Isaiah was written after that time. And therefore, you've got to allow that God was able to give Isaiah or someone prophetic insight in the future of a very accurate and graphic predictive sort. Now, I have never had any problems seeing that author as Isaiah.

But who am I? It doesn't matter what I think. Let me say this. There are many reasons to believe that Isaiah is the author of both sections.

There is internal evidence and there is external evidence. I'd like to talk about both of these if I could. First of all, the internal evidence is that there's no hint after chapter 39 and at the beginning of chapter 40 that we're changing authors.

Internally, there's nothing in the book to suggest that the material in chapters 40 and beyond is intended to be understood to be written by somebody other than the previous chapters. If it is a patchwork of two documents put together later by some scribe, it's a seamless merge without any evidence left that these were originally two documents. Furthermore, there are in the book of Isaiah 25 words, at least 25 words or word forms in the Hebrew that are unique to Isaiah.

They're not found anywhere outside the book of Isaiah, but they're found in both sections of Isaiah. That is, you know, unique Isaianic vocabulary that you will not find in any other book of the Old Testament. They're only in the book of Isaiah, but they're found in the early part and the latter part, which is, you know, significant.

Another thing that's significant is that Isaiah has a favorite name that he uses for God,

and that name is the Holy One of Israel. Now, this term is used by Isaiah 12 times in the first segment in the book of Judgment. He calls God the Holy One of Israel.

The expression is used 14 times in the book of Comfort, the second segment of Isaiah. But outside of Isaiah, it appears only six times in the entire Old Testament. Now, since it does appear six times outside of Isaiah, it's not a unique Isaianic term, but it's hardly ever used outside of Isaiah.

In, you know, 38 books of the Old Testament, you find its occurrence only six times, whereas in Isaiah, you find it 26 times, and almost evenly divided between the two sections of Isaiah. It's quite clearly Isaiah's typical way of speaking about God, and it's common to both segments. Again, the internal evidence seems to support one author, the vocabulary evidence.

Also, thematic evidence seems to confirm it. There are certain themes that recur in the book of Isaiah, and when I say they recur, they happen in most cases four to six to ten or twelve times. Certain themes are returned to by the prophet and repeated.

He had several favorite ideas that he kept coming back to. These characteristic themes are found in both segments. Let me just give you a few examples.

The idea that the nation was sick and needed healing is introduced in the first chapter, verses five and six, and is repeated several times in the first 39 chapters. But it's also in the second segment, after chapter 40. The most important occurrence of the idea being in Isaiah 53, verses four and five, where it talks about how the Messiah will bring healing to the nation of this national sickness.

It's a motif where Israel is described as if it's a sick man needing a healing, and the case is developed for the sickness of Israel in the early part of the book, and in the latter section it describes who the healer is of this sickness. Another theme that seems to run through the whole book is the highway of Jehovah, or the highway upon which the righteous and the redeemed walk. We first read of it, I think, in the 11th chapter, where there's a highway, but it's also mentioned in chapter 40, which is the beginning of the second segment of Isaiah.

Those are just two characteristic instances. It's many, many times referred to the highway of holiness, the highway of the redeemed, the highway in the wilderness, and so forth. But it is found both in the first segment and the second segment.

As far as I know, it's a motif that's not used in the other prophets. I think it's unique to Isaiah. If it's not unique to Isaiah, it's still nonetheless characteristically Isaianic.

The idea that the Messiah would be a shoot or a sprig growing up out of the root of Jesse is something found in both parts of Isaiah. He is so described, as Jesus is so described, in Isaiah 11, 1, which says, There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a

branch shall grow out of his roots. And it goes on to describe Jesus as that one.

In Isaiah 53, which is, of course, in the second part of the book, in verse 2, it says, For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of dry ground. So here, the Messiah is described as a shoot growing up out of the ground, out of a root. It's just a figure, but it's found in both sections of Isaiah.

The idea of the wolf and the lamb and the bear and the kid and so forth lying down together, we all know that imagery. In fact, at Christmas time, there's always Christmas cards with a picture of the lion and the lamb laying down. Actually, the Bible nowhere refers to the lion and the lamb laying down together, but the closest thing you come to it is the wolf and the lamb and the lion and the kid and so forth and the calf.

This is found in Isaiah chapter 11, initially. Isaiah 11, verses 6 through 9, is where we get that picture. It's a picture of the Messianic Age, the Golden Age, which we'll have to identify by analysis later.

But it says, for example, in Isaiah 11, 6, The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together. And a little child shall lead them, the cow and the bear shall graze, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play at the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand over the viper's den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. That's in the first section of Isaiah. In the second section, if you turn to Isaiah 65, verse 25 says, The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, the dust shall be the serpent's food, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.

It's almost verbatim the same, Isaiah 65, verse 25. So the first segment and the second segment have this picture. Another concept that's found throughout the book of Isaiah in both segments is that of the banner of Jehovah.

It says that the Messiah himself is a banner that God raises up for the Gentiles to see and to rally around. This too has its first instance in Isaiah 11, verse 12. It says, He will set up a banner for the nations and will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Setting up this banner to rally the Israelites and the Gentiles, the nations, around. In later parts of Isaiah, including the second half or the second segment, there is also repetition of this theme. Isaiah 49, 22 being an example.

Isaiah 49, 22 says, Behold, I will lift up my hand in an oath to the nations. I will set up my standard or my banner for the peoples. They shall bring your sons in their arms and your

daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

Same thought as we found in Isaiah 11, 12, but this time it's in the second segment of Isaiah. Also in Isaiah 62, and verse 10. Isaiah 62, 10 says, Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people.

Build up, build up the highway. There's the highway motif. Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples.

This idea of God lifting up a banner for the peoples is again and again used in Isaiah and it's not confined to one or the other of the segment. Another theme that's found throughout the book of Isaiah is that of the concept of the exodus. That is the second exodus.

We will find, I'll tell you right now in advance what we will find a great deal. In the history of the Old Testament, there were two times that God did a mighty deliverance of saving the whole nation of the Jews from foreign captivity. The first time was through Moses, when the whole nation was brought out of bondage in Egypt.

The second time was under Zerubbabel and his successors, when God brought the whole nation back, revived it from the dead. It had been 70 years in captivity in Babylon and God delivered them out. Now, what we will find, I'll tell you in advance what you'll find, and of course, I hope it's not just the power of suggestion that now you'll find it, but what I believe we are authorized to find and supposed to find in the book of Isaiah and other prophets is that both of these great deliverances, the birth of the nation, which happened twice, in the exodus, when God delivered them from Egypt, and in the return of the exiles from Babylon, when he delivered them from Babylon.

Both were great deliverances, both were the birth of a new era, and so forth. These historical events become historical reference points and types to depict the spiritual deliverance, the birth of the new covenant era, God saving his people, not from a foreign captor, but from their sins. Deliverance from sin.

Now, I can demonstrate this beyond a shadow of doubt with reference to the exodus, because the New Testament itself repeatedly speaks of what Jesus did for us as being the antitype of the exodus. Christ, our Passover, his sacrifice for us, Moses and Elijah met with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration to discuss the exodus he was going to accomplish. There's many, many times in the New Testament that the salvation of Christ is likened to the salvation of the Jews from Egypt in the exodus.

It is an established New Testament principle that the exodus was a type of Christian salvation. It is not as clearly established, but I think it can be established, that the return from Babylon was also a type of salvation for exactly the same reasons. Both the exodus and the return of the exiles from Babylon were, in principle, the same thing.

God rescuing the nation from oppressors and creating it anew from scratch, almost. And that is what, of course, spiritually happened in the New Testament. And I believe that we will find that in Isaiah, the deliverance in the exodus and the deliverance from Babylon both serve as jumping-off points to discuss the salvation of Jehovah, which is what Isaiah means, the salvation of Jehovah, in Christ.

Now, this is very obvious in many passages where the exodus is referred to, and Isaiah is predicting something that will be like when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Like the time that he saved them. And I believe that in every case, this exodus motif is a reference to salvation.

I believe in the later chapters of Isaiah, where he is talking about the return of the exiles from Babylon, that this also serves, in a sense, to have a double fulfillment. See, the exodus was already past history in Isaiah's day, but the Babylonian captivity was still future. And so, he didn't ever predict the exodus, but he predicted something that would be like the exodus, greater than the exodus, analogous to the exodus, and that is the salvation that is in Christ, that we now know and enjoy.

The Babylonian exile and its deliverance from it was, of course, still future in Isaiah's day, as was the coming of Christ's future in his day. And he would sometimes see a vision in which he would describe the exiles coming back from Babylon, and he would just shift gears all of a sudden to talk about the messianic age and the salvation in Christ. It's clear that he does this, because there are passages where he specifically talks about the Israelites coming out of Babylon, and then before he's done, he's saying something that the New Testament writers are quoting about being fulfilled in Christ.

And here's something we need to acquaint ourselves with about prophetic writings. In this sense, Isaiah will be sort of a prototype of all the prophets, because we'll find this to be true in many of the prophets, if you get it straight in studying Isaiah, it'll help you in understanding the other prophets and how they communicate similar things. The prophets will very often follow a pattern like this in the arrangement of their material.

They'll have a section where they're complaining, God's complaint against Israel, labeling and cataloging the sins of the people, spelling out the judgments that they can expect. Usually, if it's in the case of the Northern Kingdom, the judgment is the Assyrians coming to destroy them. If it's the Southern Kingdom that's in view, it's usually the Assyrians and or the Babylonians, depending on the context.

But God is talking about bringing great troubles and suffering and punishments on the nations for their sins. But then, after the prophets have done that, invariably, well, I shouldn't say invariably, because there may be an exception somewhere, but almost invariably, after the sins have been cataloged, the punishments have been described, there is then a section where the prophet describes how God's going to make it right afterwards, how God's going to save them. If the punishment described is that of going

into Babylon, then what will follow will be a description of God's going to take them out of Babylon and bring them back to their land again.

But what happens again and again in the prophets, and Isaiah will be a very good place to see this phenomenon, is that once the prophet has talked about how God's going to deliver them and fix things up, that is connected to an immediately following prophecy of the Messianic era. No doubt, because what God wants to convey is that this deliverance that he's going to accomplish from Babylon or from wherever is simply a precursor and a type of the great ultimate deliverance that he'll someday accomplish for all people in the Messiah. But it's a phenomenon we will find in even the first two chapters of Isaiah, and we'll see it again and again in Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, that the prophets will complain about the sins of the people, they'll spell out the judgments they can expect, they'll talk about some temporal deliverance that God will give them after that, after he's finished purging them of their sins by punishing them, he'll rescue them temporally, and then immediately he'll just springboard into a vision of the Messianic age.

Because the temporal deliverance is a type and a precursor of, and in principle the same thing, as what God would do spiritually and ultimately and finally through the Messiah. And so we will see this pattern again and again in the prophets. Well, I mentioned the Exodus motif.

We find it, for example, in chapter 11, verse 15 and 16. It says, There is likening this deliverance to the coming out of Egypt. Now, we'll find that all the way through the book of Isaiah there are repeated references to the salvation of Jehovah being comparable or in principle like the Exodus.

Another case would be Isaiah 43, where in verse 2 it says, Just like the Jews passed through the waters. And later in the same chapter, chapter 43 of Isaiah, verses 16 and 17, it says, Because thus says the Lord who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power, they shall lie down together, they shall not rise, they are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick. The pictures of the Egyptian chariots going into the Red Sea when God made a path for the Jews through the waters and extinguishing the Egyptians there in the Red Sea.

It's a poetic way of harking back to that. But he's not, of course, predicting that because that was in the past. He's predicting something that would be analogous to that.

And so we'll find the Exodus as an image for God's redemption and salvation used frequently. And it's used in both the old and the new. I should say the earlier and the later parts of Isaiah.

One other thing that is certainly common to both segments of Isaiah is what we could call the passages of the Golden Age, the Messianic Age. There is a genre of oracles that

we will find in all the prophets. I do not know of any exceptions, except maybe Jonah, which is more told in story form.

But virtually all of the prophets have their time for the lapse into a special vision of the Messianic Age. You know, they're transported for the moment out of their own circumstances, out of the own gripes they have with their own people, out of the impending doom that their people are facing at that time to the glorious age which is out there. They know not how far away or in what way it will be fulfilled, but they see the age of the Messiah.

They see a time of peace and righteousness and prosperity and all their enemies subdued and everybody having enough and everyone living peaceably under their vine and their fig tree. And basically a time of prosperity and justice and peace and security under the Messiah. There are in Isaiah, I haven't counted them, but there's easily a dozen or more excursions like this, where the prophet, you know, branches off, gets off the subject he's been talking about and just kind of talks about the Messianic Age.

These are what I would call the Golden Age of the Messianic Age passages. You might as well learn what I mean by those. They're of a certain type.

The first one we encounter is at the beginning of Isaiah chapter 2. There's another one at the end of Isaiah chapter 4. There's one in Isaiah chapter 9 and another one we've been drawing from quite a bit in chapter 11 that we've been talking about. And they keep going on through. Chapter 35 is another one.

There's extended ones in Isaiah 54 and further on, but in 65, especially the latter chapters. The last six chapters or seven. But what I'm saying is that these are all of a type that, you know, they're current.

They go through the whole book of Isaiah, the early part and the late part. And so these are some of the themes that are common to the first and the second segments of Isaiah. Now, it would be possible, of course, for a later writer to borrow some of Isaiah's ideas and to include them.

But since we don't know that to have happened, the evidence is in favor. The vocabulary of the two sections has got its own peculiarities. The themes are the same.

There's every reason to believe the author is the same. And we could judge that from internal evidence alone, but we have external evidence, too. I'll start with the least important and move on to the most important external evidence.

First of all, the traditions of the Jews and of Christians have always held to what we call the unity of Isaiah. That is, it's one book, not two. One author, not two or more.

The Jews never entertained the theory that there was more than one author of Isaiah.

And the church never entertained the theory until this century. Basically, it's an innovation of the present century, which has produced a whole bunch of garbage of many kinds.

This is one of the bits of garbage that's produced. Prior to this century, all Christians and all Jews believed that Isaiah wrote the whole book. Now, that doesn't mean they were right, but it says something.

I mean, if in fact the way that the second part of Isaiah was written, you know, as being set in the time of Babylon or whatever, if that really was real evidence for thinking people to reject the Isaiaic authorship of it, why is it that intelligent Christians and Jews never saw that as a problem before? Certainly, they all recognized what everybody recognized, that the Babylonian setting of those chapters. But neither Jewish nor Christian scholars have ever believed in the past, before this century, that that was any argument against Isaiah having written it. They just happen to believe in the supernatural in those days.

They used to believe that God could reveal the future. It is simply the rationalistic and secularistic tone of the philosophy of the modern age that has introduced this theory, because it's the only way they can accommodate the phenomenon. But the tradition of the Jews and the Christians have always held to a single authorship of the book of Isaiah.

Another consideration that's interesting is that when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, of course, the whole book of Isaiah was found there. Now, the Dead Sea Scrolls, of course, date from the time of Christ himself. And those who held to the dual authorship of Isaiah suspected that the Dead Sea Scrolls, when the book of Isaiah was opened, might show a division between chapter 39 and 40 that would show that they recognized these were originally two different books.

But when the scroll of Isaiah was opened, what's interesting is that chapter 39 of Isaiah ended one line before the end of a page. And the first line of chapter 40 was put under it before the second line was put above it. In other words, if they saw the book of Isaiah as really two books, it would have been quite natural to end chapter 39 at that page, even though there's room for one more line, and start the new one on another document.

But in the Dead Sea Scrolls, chapter 40 begins on the last line of the same page on which chapter 39 is found, so that there's no evidence that those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls recognized these as two different documents. They just saw it as a seamless, continuing book. Another factor to consider is the unlikelihood of the dual authorship theory.

Consider this. Virtually everybody believes that some of the loftiest poetry and prophecy in the Bible is in the second part of Isaiah. Chapters 40 through 66 are some of the finest writing that the Jewish hands have ever produced.

They are the most graphic depictions of the Messiah and the Messianic Age. They are the most remarkable prophecies in the book of Isaiah and probably in the entire Old Testament. Yet, if this was not written by Isaiah, nobody knows who did write it.

If Isaiah didn't write those chapters, then they have come to us anonymously. Now consider the likelihood of this. What is the likelihood that a book as insignificant as Obadiah, which is a single chapter long and only has a prediction of the doom of Edom, would have retained the name of its author? That is, those who preserved it remembered who wrote it, even though it was a very insignificant book.

But those who preserved the latter 27 chapters of Isaiah, they forgot who wrote it. They didn't know who wrote it. They thought maybe Isaiah wrote it.

But in fact, it was written 100 years later, but they didn't know that. I mean, you would either have to postulate that someone back there who first put them together was perpetrating a deliberate hoax on his own people and on his own religious system, or else that someone mistakenly thought those chapters were written by Isaiah but weren't really. And if the latter theory is true, then how can we account for the fact that some of the finest writing in the entire Bible was written by somebody whose name was never remembered by people a generation later? How could he have been forgotten when such minor prophets were remembered so carefully? The suggestion seems to me unlikely and unreasonable in the extreme to suggest that these chapters really were from some anonymous author whose identity was immediately forgotten right after he wrote them.

Of course, the most important evidence for the single authorship of Isaiah is the testimony of Jesus Christ and, of course, the other New Testament writers. Isaiah is quoted by name over 20 times in the New Testament. Now, he's quoted a lot more than 20 times in the New Testament, but by name, where the name Isaiah is found is about 20 times.

You'll find a whole bunch of other times where it says it's written in the prophet, and then it'll quote Isaiah without saying which prophet it was. But actually identifying the quote as being from Isaiah, the New Testament does it about 20 times, and this from both parts of Isaiah. One thing that's interesting is that in the book of Matthew, Matthew quotes Isaiah by name six times, saying, as it is written in the prophet Isaiah, or as Isaiah said, or as Isaiah wrote.

Six times in Matthew, Isaiah is quoted by name. Three of the quotes in Matthew are from the first 39 chapters, the first segment of Isaiah, and three of them are from the latter 27 chapters of Isaiah. So, Matthew quotes equally from both segments and identifies the author in every case as Matthew.

Now, there's another interesting place in John chapter 12, verses 38 through 41. I'd like to read this to you, have you read along with me if you would. 38 through 41, it says that

the word of Isaiah, the prophet might be fulfilled which he spoke, the Lord, excuse me, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 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 so that I should heal them.

These things Isaiah said when he saw his glory and spoke of him. Now, the first quote from Isaiah in verse 38 here comes from Isaiah 53, verse 1, obviously part of the book of Comfort, the second part of Isaiah. The second quote that's found here in verse 40 is from Isaiah chapter 6, which is clearly part of the book of Judgment, part of the first section of Isaiah.

So, John, the gospel writer, the apostle, quotes a passage from the latter part and a passage from the former part of Isaiah in rapid succession, right next to each other, applies it, both sections, to Isaiah. So, we would have New Testament authority, as well as the long-standing traditional authority of the Jews in Christianity, that Isaiah wrote the whole thing, the internal evidence favors it, and nothing really stands against that proposition except an a priori rejection of the validity and possibility of the supernatural. Now, they do the same thing with the book of Daniel, we'll talk about that later on, but Daniel and Isaiah have some of the most amazing prophecies, the most specific prophecies fulfilled in history, and the most embarrassing to the rationalist who doesn't believe in the supernatural, because they are so specific and happened, they actually came true exactly as done.

So, Isaiah and Daniel have come under attack from the critics far more than any other books of the prophets, and in every case, it's a questioning of the authorship, trying to say they were written later than the date. But, again, there's no good reason to say that, only prejudice and bigotry leads to that idea. Now, let's call that the end of the introduction, but in the couple of minutes I have here or less, I want to tell you what we're going to do with Isaiah.

As you know, we're severely limited in our time. We have, I think, 15 sessions in addition to this one that we've just finished, to cover 66 chapters of Isaiah. To do that would require, what, the taking of something like four and a half chapters per session, which, I don't know, we might be able to pull it off, but I've got another idea.

What I'm going to do is assign you each day a certain number of chapters to read. I want you to read them the actual night before the classes. And instead of actually speaking verse by verse through those chapters, what I think I'm going to do is take Isaiah topically.

I've done this some years, I don't do this most years, but I've done this a couple of years before, and I think it's profitable. If you don't do the reading on your own, you'll get frustrated because you won't sense the flow of things. But what I want to do is, while it's

fresh in your mind, you've just read the material, I want to draw from the material some of the main themes of Isaiah, and then trace those themes through the whole book, so that as you end up reading the latter portions, you'll have more and more of it that you just understand on your own, that you won't need comments on, because some of these themes just repeat 20 times in the book, and for me to make the same comments 20 times is not a good economy of time.

So what I'm going to largely do is count on you to read assigned material in Isaiah in advance, and then we'll come to it together, and I'll draw the major themes from that section, and trace those themes through the book of Isaiah. The stuff that explains itself I won't make any comment on. I'll try to clarify those things that do need it.

Frankly, I don't think you'll have any occasion to be disappointed that we treat it in this way. We do the same thing with Ezekiel, by the way. Ezekiel will be taken topically as well for the same reason.

There's a great deal of repetition in these longer prophetic books. It's easier to take all the passages that are saying the same thing together, instead of hitting it 20 times as you go through. So this is how we're going to do it, but I'm going to assign you some actual, a certain number of chapters each day to read that night, and then the next day's lectures will cover it.

But what I think I'm going to do first is actually survey the book, without making detailed comments at all, in the next couple of sessions that we have on it. I'm just going to go run through the book, a rapid survey of the book, bringing out the main points without detail to give you the big picture, and then we're going to take it more in the segments of chapters and so forth. So I'm not even going to give you a segment of it, assignment to read tonight, but I'd suggest that you read as much of it as you can tonight.

I don't know, I won't ask for a show of hands how many of you have read Isaiah recently, in order to prepare for us going through it. I hope you have. We didn't give you self-study questions on it, so you could have gotten away with not reading it.

But I hope you've read it just recently, and I hope you'll read it through, maybe even more than once while we're lecturing through it. But the way I intend to cover it, I think will be very profitable, and we'll just see how it goes. I think this way I can get it all into the number of sessions we have available.

But only in this way can I do it, I think. Okay, we'll stop there then, and have lunch.