

An Attempt To Listen To God

An Introduction to  
The Book of The Prophet Isaiah  
Part 1

By

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**Introduction**

The book of Isaiah is not only one of the longest books in the entire bible it is also, in many ways, the most Christological. It has been called the gospel of Isaiah because the reoccurring themes of Christ, redemption and salvation are prominent in it. This is manifest very clearly in chapters 40-66 when it is observed that “Jacob” and “Redeemer/Redeemed” is mentioned together seven times (chs. 41:14; 43:1-2; 44:23; 48:20; 49:26; 59:20; 60:16). How precious this is that Jacob, who was as his name means, a contriving twister, can know the richness of God’s redemption. It is not to be wondered at when Paul speaks of:

- a) His grace (Gal 1:15)
- b) The riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7)
- c) The exceeding riches of his grace (Eph. 2:7)
- d) His great grace (Acts 4:33)

These are not the only themes for, like the epistle to the Romans, there is spoken of:

- a) The condemnation and judgment of God on His people and then on the nations. (In Romans the order is reversed for God deals first with the nations and then the Jews)
- b) The righteousness of the Lord in His vengeance.
- c) The fierceness of divine wrath is set in contrast to His gracious compassion.

Yet one theme permeates them all. It is the absolute sovereignty of God when God is seen “high and lifted up” (ch. 6:1); “None beside me” (ch. 45:6, 21); asking the question: “Whom will ye liken unto me” (ch. 46:5); and at times the expression “I will” in 114 verses, and in only two of them is it not used of God (ch. 14:13-14); and “I am” within the context of sovereignty is used 25 times. Interestingly it is not used in this way in chs. 1-39 where it is always used of man.

God is sovereign and supreme, and being such, He moves according to His time, in His own way, for the fulfilling of His purposes and promises. He will never fail in any good thing He has promised, neither will any purpose fall. This is made very emphatic by expressions such as: “My word . . . it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please” (Isa. 55:11). Israel and the nations will learn that rebellion against God comes at a heavy cost, and yet, they will also learn if they obey, He is full of compassion and is a pleading God. His holiness will remain unsullied and will ever be the balance between His judgment and mercy, pity and sternness.

It is a book that cannot be said to be solely historical and biographical as Jonah was, but is more like Daniel being historical, biographical, and prophetic. Neither does he speak of one nation and their sin as Obadiah does, but speaks of a number of nations as the following table shows, but does include Israel (ch. 1:3); Judah and Jerusalem (ch. 2:1). One of the reasons this is done is to manifest the supremacy and sovereignty of God over all gods and nations. In the ancient days the gods of the people were patriarchal. Egypt had their gods and the same with Babylon, Assyria, etc. The God of Israel is the “God above all gods” (2 Chron. 2:5). The nations Isaiah speaks of God’s judgment about are:

| Nation             | Reference | Nation                | Reference |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Babylon / Assyrian | Ch. 13:1  | The desert of the sea | Ch. 21:1  |
| Philistine         | Ch. 14:31 | Dumah                 | Ch. 21:11 |
| Moab               | Ch. 15:1  | Arabia                | Ch. 21:13 |
| Damascus           | Ch. 17:1  | The Valley of Vision  | Ch. 22:1  |
| Egypt              | Ch. 19:1  | Tyre                  | Ch. 23:1  |

## The Author

It has been suggested that when the writer to the Hebrews penned the words: “they were sawn asunder” (Heb. 11:37), he was thinking of Isaiah for according to Jewish history, he was put in a hollowed tree and sawn. From what can be understood, Isaiah was contemporary with Hosea, Micah and Nahum. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Kings of Judah (ch. 1:1).

Isaiah was married to a lady who was a prophetess (ch. 8:3) and they had two sons, Shear-jashub which means “a remnant shall return”, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz which means “Haste ye, haste ye to the spoil” (Ch. 8:3).

## The Controversy

The development of the argument against one author:

- a) For approximately 250 years there has been discussion concerning if Isaiah was the work of one, two, or multiple “scholars”. The singularity of the one author was never questioned until some German scholars, in the early eighteenth century, began to question its authorship. In the Cambridge Bible for schools and Colleges, Professor Skinner wrote: “The book which bears the name of Isaiah is in reality a collection of prophetic oracles, showing manifest traces of composite authorship and having a complicated literary history behind it. Not less than two thirds of its bulk consists of anonymous prophecies”. From that which I have gathered the chronological order seems to be as follows for the questioning of the single author:
  - i) It began with Koppe when in 1780 he questioned the genuineness of chapter fifty.
  - ii) In 1789 Doederlein questioned all of chapters 40-66.
  - iii) Rosenmuller was the first to deny the prophecy against Babylon. (ch. 13:1-14:23)
  - iv) Eichhorn questioned Isaiah’s proclamation against Tyre. (ch. 23)
  - v) Gesenius and Ewald denied Isaiah wrote chapters 24-27.
  - vi) Gesenius taught that an unknown wrote chapters 15-16.
  - vii) In 1840 Rosenmuller denied that Isaiah wrote chapters 34-35.
  - viii) Ewald questioned chs. 12-13.
  - ix) Delitzsch wrote that chapters 40-66 were written close to the end of the Babylonian exile.
  - x) Since then, even the latter part, chapters 40-66, have been fragmented into the writings of an unknown number of men. Drs. Driver, Smith, and Koeing indicate that 44 chapters out of the 66 were not written by Isaiah! Others such as Drs. Hackmann Guthe have reduced it so that of the 1,292 verses in Isaiah only 262 are genuine!!!

The seriousness of this questioning.

- a) Since we believe that the scriptures are the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, then it becomes an “either” / “or” situation. Either the scholars were right or the Holy Spirit was wrong, and the result is that the truths of a number of New Testament books are to be questioned. This carries very serious implications.
  - i) The reasoning for the multiplicity of authors is based on three fronts but with a deeper significance underneath. The three fronts are: differences in vocabulary; differences in concepts and thoughts of how a matter is expressed; and differences in historical references. The argument is that since the prophetic section is so precise, it had to be written after the exile, that is as a history. This leads to the deeper significance of the objections to the one authorship, it is the rejection of divine intervention and revelation. This is casting doubt on the ability and activity of God. See the foolishness of this, man, six foot of dust determining what God can and cannot do! Does God reveal truth beforehand? With hundreds of prophecies given in the scripture, and not one has ever fallen to the ground unfulfilled, it is evident that the God I worship does give divine revelation.
  - ii) What is the evidence for the singularity of Isaiah? It is universally acknowledged that Isaiah is subdivided into two sections: chs. 1-39 and 40-66. (The reality is the book is divided into three sections: chs. 1-35 is mainly historical relative to the nations; chs. 36-39 is historical relating to Hezekiah and individual, and chs. 40-66 is prophetic). Those who believe there was at least

two writers will call chapters 1- 39 the former, and chapters 40-66 the latter. The following sections will give ample evidence that there was only one author for the entire book showing that there are words used in both sections of Isaiah which go toward the establishing of one Isaiah and not multiples.

1. Evidence No. 1 The Holy Spirit by the writers of the New Testament ascribe their quotations one author:
  - (a) Matthew will quote once from the former portion (Matt. 4:14), and once from the latter portion (Matt. 8:17), always ascribing it the passages to Isaiah.
  - (b) Luke will quote four times, all from the latter portion of Isaiah (Lk. 3:4; 4:17; Acts 8:28; 8:30), always ascribing it the passages to Isaiah.
  - (c) John, the gospel writer, will quote twice from the former portion (Jn. 12:39, 41) and once from the latter portion (Jn. 12:38), always ascribing it the passages to Isaiah.
  - (d) John the Baptist will quote twice from the latter portion (Matt. 3:3; Jn. 1:23), always ascribing it the passages to Isaiah.
  - (e) Paul will quote six passages, four from the former portion (Acts 28:25; Rom. 9:27, 29; 15:12), and twice from the latter portion (Rom. 10:16, 20), always ascribing it the passages to Isaiah.
  
2. Evidence No. 2 The “unfinished ending” of chapter 39.
  - (a) It ends with a king giving a sigh of relief that the approaching judgment will not be in his lifetime. “Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days” (ch. 39:8). How different are the last words of chapter sixty-six: “they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles . . . they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord . . . I will take of them for priests and for Levites . . . all flesh shall come and worship before me, they shall go forth and look on the carcasses of the men that have trespassed against me . . . and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Ch. 66:20-24)
  
3. Evidence No. 3 The use of words found in both sections.
  - (a) The argument is that the following words are found only in the "latter" portion of Isaiah, chs. 40-66, but the following will show they are used in both sections.
    - (i) The titles Creator, Redeemer, Savior. The facts of creating, redeeming, and saving are referred to in 1:27; 12:1, 2; 14:1; 17:10; 25:9; 27:11; 29:22; 30:18; 33:22; 35:10, all in the former section.
    - (ii) The thought of Jehovah as “Father” but this relationship is stated in 1:2.
    - (iii) The word “bachar” (to choose) but see 1:29; 7:15, 16; 14:1.
    - (iv) The word “halal” (to praise), but see 13:10; 38:18.
    - (v) The word “pa-er” (to glorify) but see 10:15.
    - (vi) The word “patsach” (to break forth into joy) but see 14:7.
    - (vii) The word “tsemach” (to spring forth) but see 4:2.
    - (viii) The word “zero” (the arm [of Jehovah] but see 9:20; 17:5; 30:30; 33:2.
    - (ix) The word “tehillah” meaning praise does not indicate post exile writing but actually is found in Deut. 10:21; 26:19.
    - (x) The concepts connected with the word “everlasting”
      - (1) Everlasting Father, ch. 9:6 and 64:8
      - (2) Everlasting name, ch. 12:4 and 56:5
      - (3) Everlasting covenant, ch. 24:5 and 55:3
      - (4) Everlasting sign, ch. 7:11 and 55:13
      - (5) Everlasting salvation, ch. 12:2 and 45:17
      - (6) Everlasting God, ch. 1:10 and 40:28
      - (7) Everlasting light, ch. 60:19, 20.
      - (8) Everlasting judge, ch. 33:14 and 51:5
      - (9) Everlasting strength, ch. 12:2 and 51:9
      - (10) Everlasting joy, ch. 12:3 and 55:12

4. Evidence No. 4

(a) Passages in the New Testament which name Isaiah as the author of chapters 1-39

- (i) Matt. 4:13 refers to Isa. 9:1, 2
- (ii) Matt. 13:1 refers to Isa. 6:9
- (iii) Matt. 15:7 refers to Isa. 29:13
- (iv) Mk. 7:6 refers to Isa. 29:13
- (v) Jn. 12:39 refers to Isa. 6:9
- (vi) Jn. 12:41 refers to Isa. 6:9
- (vii) Acts 28:25 refers to Isa. 6:9
- (viii) Rom. 9:27 refers to Isa. 10:22-23
- (ix) Rom. 9:29 refers to Isa. 1:9
- (x) Rom. 15:12 refers to Isa. 11:10

5. Evidence No. 5

(a) Passages in the New Testament which name Isaiah as the author of chapters 40-66

- (i) Matt. 3:3 refers to Isa. 40:3
- (ii) Matt. 8:17 refers to Isa. 53:4
- (iii) Matt. 12:17 refers to Isa. 42:1-3
- (iv) Lk. 3:4 refers to Isa. 40:3-5
- (v) Lk. 4:17 refers to Isa. 61:1-2
- (vi) Jn. 1:23 refers to Isa. 40:3
- (vii) Jn. 12:38 refers to Isa. 53:1
- (viii) Acts 8:28 refers to Isa. 53:7-8
- (ix) Acts 8:30 refers to Isa. 52:7-8
- (x) Rom. 10:16 refers to Isa. 53:1
- (xi) Rom. 10:20 refers to Isa. 65:1-2
- (xii) The above twenty-one passages are distributed over six books of the New Testament: Matt. (six times); Mark (once); Luke (twice); John (four times); Acts (three times); Romans (five times).

(b) (The prophet is named by seven different speakers or writers in the New Testament:

- (i) Christ
  - (1) Four times by Christ Himself; three being from the former portion of Isaiah (Matt. 13:14; 15:7; Mark 7:6), and one from the latter (Matt. 12:17).

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

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