

Chapter 28: Isaiah

Key Terms

- Isaiah: eighth-century prophet to Judah
- Cyrus: Medo-Persian king who defeated the Babylonian Empire
- Assyrian Empire: major power in the ancient Near East ca. 1076–612 BC
- Tiglath-Pileser III: Neo-Assyrian king who invaded Israel
- Sennacherib: Assyrian king who invaded Judah in 701 BC
- Babylonian Empire: major power in the ancient Near East ca. 612–539 BC

Key Ideas

- The trustworthiness of the Lord.
- The incomparability of Israel's God.
- Divine sovereignty in judgment and deliverance.

Chapter Summary

Isaiah is a collection of the prophetic sayings and oracles of the prophet Isaiah. There is significant debate over the book's unity. Because of the distinct shifts between chapters 1–40 and 41–66, as well as the remarkable predictive prophecy in the earlier chapters, critical scholars generally posit at least two authors for this book. However, many scholars argue for the unity of the entire book based on NT and OT evidence.

Chapters 1–39 are set against the invasion of Israel by Tiglath-Pileser III. Damascus was subsequently conquered and the people were exiled as their land became part of the Assyrian Empire. The second major event underlying these chapters was the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib in 701. Because Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the Assyrian army was destroyed.

The purpose of Isaiah is to convey the trustworthiness of Yahweh. The book begins with oracles of indictment, and then records the commissioning of Isaiah. The author next treats the failures of Ahaz and delivers oracles against the nations. The "Woe" oracles shift to the time of Hezekiah, recording his alliances with Egypt, his deliverance from Sennacherib, and the prophecy of his downfall. Next is the exile to Babylon, then prophecy of political and spiritual restoration for Israel, effected in part by "the Servant"—possibly the ideal Davidic king. The author closes by addressing those who would return from exile in the future.

There are several major themes in the book of Isaiah. First, the sons of Isaiah are given names as signs of what is to happen to Israel. Second, four sections in Isaiah deal with the Servant, who is likely to be identified with the messiah. Third, Isaiah emphasizes God's holiness with the title "The Holy One of Israel." Fourth, Isaiah also emphasizes Yahweh's role of redeemer. Fifth and finally, Isaiah's eschatology is a kingdom eschatology.