

Nyack College

Old Testament Exegetical Commentary of Isaiah

Submitted to Professor Russell

Eng OT751

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by

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Introduction to Isaiah

1 Historical Background

Isaiah was written in the 8th century B.C. The times were of the Neo-Assyrian dynasty. There has been war between the northern and southern kingdom of Israel. King Ahaz wanted aid from the Assyrians. King Ahaz is warned by Isaiah not to ally with the Assyrians, but God would be their protector. God wants Israel and the King Ahaz and later Hezekiah to trust him. Isaiah was said to have been written by one author up until the 18th century A.D. ¹ Chapters 40-66 is believed to have been written by another author because of the mention of Cyrus which happened during the exilic period 100 years later under the Persian period.

2 Prevailing Conditions

There are two arguments concerning the authorship of Isaiah. One is that it was written by one author. The other is that it was written by multiple authors. The evidence to support a single authorship is the use of vocabulary literary style that is similar through the first half of Isaiah and the second half of Isaiah. These are words that occur multiple times throughout Isaiah.

The second reason for single authorship is there are no historical references to the exilic period or post-exilic periods.² There are three possible reasons for this. It is presented that the author may have not known this information; The author knew it but did not include it; The author included it but, it was removed later.³ Isaiah is the authority of the book of Isaiah.

The authorship suggested as Isaiah flows with the other preexilic prophets that came against ritualism like Jeremiah.⁴

There is the contrast between two Kings that differed in who they trusted. One being King Ahaz who trusted in his alliance with Assyria (2 Kings 16, Isaiah 7-8). The other King Hezekiah trusted God (Isaiah 36:15).

The invasion of Israel by the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III is background for chapters 7-12.

The aggression to Judah was because of the Syrup-Ephraimite war 735-732 B.C.

3 Main Characters

¹ John N. Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 33.

² Oswalt, 39

³ Oswalt, 39

⁴ Oswalt, 40

3.1 Isaiah

Isaiah is the son of Amoz prophesied in the latter half of the eighth century BC. Constable wrote, Isaiah prophesied to Judah and had access to royal Kings.⁵ He may most likely have been a part of the royal family. He was called to Prophecy after Uzziah died in 740 BC. He embraced his calling. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah was married she was called a prophetess (8:3) they had at two sons, to whom he gave meaningful names that summarized major themes of his prophecies (8:18): Shearjashub (a remnant shall return, 7:3), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (hastening to the spoil, 8:3). No other prophet speaks to the redemptive nature of Jesus Christ found in the new testament.⁶

3.2 Judah

Judah has had a division on the kingdom between Israel and Judah. King Ahaz is calling upon Assyria help to protect them (Kings 16:7-9). Judah has had some rivalry with the Northern kingdom of Israel.⁷ Judah has gained some things that they now have turned to trust in Judah has also found their leaders and Egypt.⁸ King Ahaz is seeking to remain in with Assyria. God has sent Isaiah to show them he alone is to be trusted. Judah must also learn that God has all power.⁹ He can say what the future holds (Isaiah 4:2). Judah has been rebellious and become arrogant.

4 Argument

The Lord loves Judah that no matter how rebellious they are He has the plan of redemption and bringing them back to himself (Isaiah 4:2). The judgement of Judah is to turn them back to God and trust in him.¹⁰

5 Purpose

Israel was to put their trust and hope in Yahweh because He was and is over all he will restore Israel as a nation in His kingdom. He is to be trusted over all else.

6 Key Verse

And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem (4:3).

7 Major Themes

The judgment of Judah for rebellion against God.

The Promise to the remnant of Judah.

The Redemption of Judah.

The Lord is Judah's Protector.

⁵ Constable, 5

⁶ Constable, 6

⁷ Oswalt, 21

⁸ Oswalt, 22

⁹ Oswalt, 395

¹⁰ Andrew Hill and John H. Walton. A Survey of the Old Testament. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 519

Interpretation and Exposition

1 The Lord's Judgement to Judah on an arrogant Judah 4:1

It was a shame if a woman had no family. The women here are willing to forgo the wedding price. Seven indicated completeness. It is more the women were looking for protection from the man as well as perhaps restoration in society if they had been raped.¹¹ During this time God caused so many men to be killed by war that there was not enough fathers and husband for the women. Hence, the women would be saying in desperation you don't have to do anything for me just give me your name.¹² This was the lowest in human pride. God is dealing with the pride of Judah.

2 The Lord's hope and promise for Judah 4:2.

The judgement Judah is experiencing will not last always there is hope for a future where Judah will see the beauty and glory of the fruit of the land. God gives hope to Judah to know not all will be wiped out there will be a remnant.

3 God's plan of redemption to Judah 4:3.

The righteous of God will be put in a book of life. This concept in the near eastern culture, specifically, Mesopotamian, used, "tablet of Destinies."¹³ Judah's remnant after the judgement will be a holy people. The plan for life and in a futuristic sense is for the remnant of Judah to experience the life in Christ once they are redeemed later from what Christ would do.

4 God's ultimate plan for Judah and restoration through judgement 4:4-6

Judah is cleansed by God through the judgement. Once the purging of Judah happened God used the language that Zion would remember under Moses, he would be once again their protector their guide by day with the cloud and by night by fire. God's protection and guidance came through the cloud and fire as the children of Israel left Egypt. God will restore this to the future posterity of Israel in the last days. Cloud in the ancient near east meant divine messenger or a representative of God.¹⁴ Zion had trusted in everything else over God and now this would be the restoring of that understanding that God is trustworthy, and he is over all.

¹¹ NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 100069

¹² Oswalt, 99

¹³ NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 100082

¹⁴ NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 100082

Application

1. The arrogance of Zion in trusting in the things they possessed and in people caused them to experience God's judgement. To break down that pride God brought Zion to shame. This shame went to the lowest point where there were not enough men for women. Women then wanted the name of whatever man there was that they were willing to take care of their own selves just to have a family. To not have a family was shameful.

Likewise, pride comes before a fall as indicated in the bible. As the women were brought low to realize their error, so God wants his people to get rid of pride and trust in him. Our trust should not be in anyone other than God who is over all.

2. There is hope after judgement. Like, with Zion God has an ultimate plan of redemption for his people. No longer will pride be in what they have and in whomsoever they trusted but their pride will be of what God has done. Likewise, when God is trying to get our attention to trust in him, we must yield knowing he is over all and makes all things beautiful in his time. Our boast should be in the Lord.
3. The Lord cleaned up Zion through judgement, but what remained was the remnant who was righteous. God wants us holy and it is God who desires us to be righteous and it is through that trust and faith in him and the one he has sent for us Jesus Christ. Just as he reminds Zion of how he led them by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night so shall he rise for his people again to be their protector, guide the one in whom they will trust. The Lord strong and mighty.

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