

ISAIAH

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AUTHOR

The book of Isaiah claims to have been written by one author, Isaiah, the son of Amoz. This claim is supported by Jewish tradition and by the New Testament, including Christ Himself. While critics have suggested other opinions, the major reason for not accepting the authorship of Isaiah is the fulfillment of specific prophecies. If God is able to reveal in advance the detailed prophecy Isaiah records, no different nor additional author is necessary. The distinctions in style, tone and message of the two parts can be logically explained on the basis of the author's argument.

Apparently Isaiah came from a high class home. His vocabulary and style demonstrate that he received a good academic preparation for his position. He preached for about forty years, principally before kings. He spoke during one of the most decisive moments in Judah's history and kings listened to his wise counsel.

DATE

The biographical information given indicates that Isaiah's prophetic ministry to Judah was carried out from 739 to about 700 B.C., during the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

BACKGROUND

Isaiah's ministry was carried out during the divided kingdom, as Israel moved toward destruction. Only the presence of a few good kings like Hezekiah saved the southern kingdom of Judah from destruction. In general, both kingdoms were characterized by rebellion, unbelief and idolatry. God sent prophets to warn them of the danger of destruction, but they refused to listen. God finally brought Assyria to destroy the northern kingdom of Israel and take them into captivity.

After the destruction of Israel, Assyria continued to move arrogantly against Judah. Hezekiah had become king of Judah and had led the nation in many reforms. As a result, God spared Jerusalem, though the other cities of Judah had already been defeated. God judged Assyria for their arrogance and preserved Judah until a much later date.

PURPOSE AND THEME

As a pre-exilic book, Isaiah speaks to Judah about her sin and idolatry, to call them to repentance. If they will turn to Him, He will bless them. God uses a message of judgment to call His people to repentance. God is going to judge Judah, destroy Jerusalem, and send His people into captivity.

In addition to the message of judgment, Isaiah looks ahead and reveals their future restoration to comfort those reading the book following the destruction of Jerusalem. He reveals two major purposes: First, God wanted His people to understand His entire program for them. Therefore, He went beyond the immediate judgment to include the restoration. Second, the restoration promises are given with the promise of judgment to give the people a basis for faith in the promises.

When the message was first given, the people did not believe God would judge them. From the perspective of the captivity, they would never believe that God would restore them. When God combined the two messages in one, He provided evidence that He would restore them. From captivity, they could see that the same God who promised them judgment had also promised their restoration. Since He accomplished the first promise, they could trust Him to fulfill the second.

**To God's people in sin, the message served as a warning of judgment to call them to repentance.
To God's people in captivity, it was a promise of restoration to encourage them to trust God.**

What lessons should we learn for our lives today from this great prophecy?

