

# THE PROPHET ISAIAH

**His life**

**His prophecies**



**An exegetical, theological and practical commentary**

**With a short introduction to the prophetic books of the  
Old Testament**

**by**

**Roland Kleger**

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# I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE PROPHETS

## A. The terms for prophets used in the O.T.

At least six different terms are used for prophets in the Old Testament, and three of these terms refer directly to Isaiah:

**“Nābî”<sup>1</sup>**: = **Prophet** is the most commonly used term. It appears over 300 times in the O.T., and its significance is especially explained in Exo 7:1-2: **“spokesperson”**. Parallel to the N.T., see 2Co 5:20: **“ambassador of Christ”**.

**“Rō’eh”<sup>2</sup>**: = **Seer** (12 times)! Especially the early prophets were called “seers”; in particular Samuel (cf. 1Sa 9:9). The last usage is in Isa 30:10, which is also the only passage in the Book of Isaiah where this term is used for prophets.

**“Khōzeh”<sup>3</sup>**: = **Visionary, seer**, i.e. the *seeing one*. The term **nābî** is most prominently used for the transmission of the Word of God, while **hōzeh** and **rō’eh** refer specifically to the receiving (beholding) of the vision or divine message.

All three terms occur in **1 Chronicles 29:29**:

<b>Nābî</b>	for	Nathan
<b>Rō’eh</b>	for	Samuel
<b>Khōzeh</b>	for	Gad

Besides these, the following three terms are also used:

**Man of God:** This term for prophet occurs 76 times (36 times for Elisha).

**Servant of the Lord<sup>4</sup>:** God himself often calls his prophets by this name: cf. 2Ki 9:7.

**Messenger of the Lord:** Haggai is called by this name (cf. Hag 1:13).<sup>5</sup> The plural form “messengers” is also used for prophets.

<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew: נָבִיא from the verb root נָבֵא, which in niphal and hithpael means “prophesying” or “speaking under the influence of inspiration”. It has the same root in Aramaic, but singular in hithpael.

<sup>2</sup> In Hebrew: רָאָה from the verb root רָאָה, which can mean “seeing”, “having visions”, “beholding”, “looking at, observing”, “visiting”, “designating”, etc.

<sup>3</sup> In Hebrew: חָזָה from the verb root חָזָה (in kal comparable with the Aramaic חָזַח), which has the following meaning: “seeing”, “beholding”, “having visions”, “prophesying” etc.

<sup>4</sup> I.e. of Yahweh. Or “servant of God” (Elohim), see e.g. Neh 10:29(30); Dan 9:11 (for Moses).

<sup>5</sup> This is the only passage in the Bible that uses the term “messenger of the LORD” (מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה) for a human person. This Hebrew word can mean “messenger” or also “angel”. Apart from the passage in Hag 1:13, the term “Angel of the

**Watchman<sup>6</sup>:** Ezekiel 3 and 33 specifically address the prophet's responsibility to warn his people (cf. Eze 3:17-21 and 33:1-9). As well as in Isa 21:11, but there Isaiah uses a synonymous verb.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps also this seventh expression:

**Son of man<sup>8</sup>:** First and foremost, the prophet Ezekiel is called by this name: cf. Eze 2:1 and many other passages in the Book of Ezekiel.

The most commonly used expression clearly shows what people understood a prophet to be: The *nābî* was a "mouthpiece" or "spokesperson" for God.<sup>9</sup> Compare also with Deu 18:15-18: the prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. Act 3:22-23).

## B. The history of the prophets

Enoch (cf. Jud 14), Noah (cf. Heb 11:7; 2Pe 2:5) and the patriarchs were already referred to as prophets. Abraham was the first who was explicitly called a prophet (*nābî*: cf. Gen 20:7). However, the first great prophet was the Hebrew Moses. Teachings played a more important role in his ministry than prophecies about the future (which was also true for many prophets after him). His sister Miriam (Exo 15:20<sup>10</sup>) and judge Deborah (cf. Jug 4:4<sup>11</sup>) were also called prophetesses. During the period from Moses to Samuel, the prophetic ministry was rarely about prophecies concerning future events.

**The true age of the prophets most notably began with Samuel (cf. Act 3:24).** The downfall of the priesthood (see e.g. the sons of Elijah in 1Sa 2) and the people's demand for an earthly king (although the Lord was their king: cf. 1Sa 8:5-8) reveals Israel's desperate need for a *spokesperson of God*. The kings (also King David, who was called "a man after God's own heart") did not normally receive a direct word from God. The Word of God was always proclaimed to them through a prophet. In this sense, the age of the monarchy was also the age of the prophets. During the time of Samuel (11<sup>th</sup> century), the text, for the first time, mentions a "**procession of prophets**" (cf. 1Sa 10:5). However, the origin of these schools of prophets is unknown. We do not have any detailed information about them. The passages Amo 2:11-12, Jer 35:6-10 and Num 6 would suggest that there were similarities to the Rechabites and Nazirites. 1Sa 19:20 states that Samuel was the chief prophet. Prophets were very numerous during the time of Elijah and Elisha (cf. 2Ki 4:38). In regard to their function, we only know that prophets lived together (2Ki 6:1-2) and served as messengers (cf. 2Ki 9:1). There is a difference between so-called *earlier* and *later* prophets. The former only proclaimed God's message orally, the latter often also wrote their messages down. The

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*Lord*" always refers to the pre-existing Son of God when he appeared to people: i.e. in Christophanies. In this context, see the chapter about the "Angel of the Lord" in our brochure *Angelology*.

<sup>6</sup> In Hebrew, the participle צֹפֵה (tsophæ) of the verb צָפָה (tsāphāh).

<sup>7</sup> The synonymous participle שֹׁמֵר (shomer) of the verb שָׁמַר (shamar) is used in Isa 21:11 for the position of watchman.

<sup>8</sup> In Hebrew: בֶּן־אָדָם (*Bèn Adam*). *Adam*: the same root word for the first human. This name is especially used for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the New Testament. Jesus often called himself the "**Son of Man**": υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (*huios tou anthrōpou*).

<sup>9</sup> See definition in Exo 7:1-2: Aaron was *nabi* (spokesperson, speaker) for Moses.

<sup>10</sup> In Hebrew, the feminine form of *nabi*: נְבִיאָה (*nēbīah*). In Isa 8:3, the wife of Isaiah is also described with this term, thus the *prophetess*.

<sup>11</sup> In Hebrew literally: "Deborah, the prophetess woman".

Old Testament canon includes writings from 16 prophets. The ministry of priests and Levites was inherited, but the prophets were called individually (by God) (cf. e.g. Amo 7:14; Isa 6:1; Jer 1).

## C. The ministry of the prophets

5 The task of a prophet was very specific. **Priests and Levites taught the law and performed religious duties. They were the people's representatives before God while the prophets were the delegates (representatives) from God to his people (or to other people).** When the people of God were in danger of only relying on the letter of the law without grasping its true meaning, God sent his prophets to revive and warn them. The prophets were revivalists and preachers. Yet, they did not preach apart from the law; they interpreted the law correctly and knew about the coming of  
10 Jesus Christ, the one who would ultimately fulfil it (cf. 1Pe 1:11).

### Résumé for the prophet ministry:

- They preached true religion revealed to the people of Israel.
- 15 • They prophesied about the future of Israel and the nations and also about the Messianic Age and eternity.
- They warned about apostasy and judgments as a result of disobedience.

## D. The message of the prophets

20 Prophets addressed contemporaries as well as future generations and were interested in current and future events. This must be considered when trying to understand prophetic speeches and explanations. The content of the prophetic books could be summarised as follows:

1. The present
2. The impending exile
- 25 3. The first coming of the Messiah: his earthly ministry and suffering
4. The second coming of the Messiah (his return) and his kingdom
5. The New Heaven and New Earth

30 Several announcements by prophets have been (or still will be) fulfilled in a two or even three-fold manner as these prophecies address events in the near and distant future. An example of this: 2Sa 7:12-16 speaks of God's covenant with David. It initially referred to Solomon, but ultimately also refers to Christ since Christ is the final fulfilment of this prophecy. One must consider that the prophets themselves often did not know which time (era) they were referring to in their prophecies (cf. 1Pe 1:10-12). It is clear, however, that Christ is at the heart of all prophecy. Prophecies can be  
35 divided into the following two categories:

- Fulfilled prophecies
  - Prophecies still awaiting fulfilment
- 40 Fulfilled prophecies (e.g. those referring to the first coming of Christ: cf. e.g. Isa 7:14; 53:1-12) support the authenticity and credibility of other predictions, i.e. prophecies still awaiting fulfilment (e.g. those referring to the second coming of Christ: cf. Dan 7:13; Zec 14:3ff).

## E. Characteristics of true prophets and true prophecies

- They speak exclusively in the name of Yahweh (cf. Deu 13:1-5; 18:20).
- They distance themselves from astrology, divination and magic etc. (cf. Deu 18:9-14).
- In contrast to false prophets (cf. Jer 23:14), true prophets were pleasing to God because they led holy lives.
- Messages were often confirmed by signs and wonders (cf. Elijah and Elisha).
- Messages did not contradict earlier revelations (Deu 13:6ff).
- Prophecies were fulfilled or will be fulfilled (Deu 18:21-22).

## F. The inspiration of the prophets

- 2Pe 1:20-21 (cf. 2Ti 3:16) states that prophets pass on the Word of God to others. Prophets knew that they were inspired by God and driven by the Holy Spirit: see the insistence on ***“this is what the LORD says”***! Nathan in 1Ch 17:1-4 serves as an example for the imperfection of prophets. However, we do not know “how” (by what means) the prophets were inspired. The prophets merely state: ***“The Word of the LORD came to me...”*** (cf. e.g. Eze 22:1.17; 23:1 etc.).

God used the qualities and personalities of individual prophets. Their origin, training, profession, character and talent also influenced their words. God inspired his servants and used them according to their individual personality.

### 20 Examples:

Ezekiel:	was a priest.
Isaiah:	came from royalty, a historian.
Amos:	was a farmer.

## 25 G. The fulfilment of prophecy

- According to Deu 18:22 and Isa 41:21-24, the fulfilment of prophecy proves its authenticity and divinity. The phenomena of fulfilled prophecy cannot be explained without a divine origin. False prophets (of which there were and, regrettably, still are many) tempted God’s people to commit apostasy and worship heathen deities. One should not follow false prophets even if they perform miracles. In fact, such prophets were to be put to death (cf. Deu 13:1-6). An unfulfilled prophecy is (further) proof that a prophet was not called by God (cf. Jer 29:9).

## H. The relationship between the prophetic books and the rest of the O.T. and N.T.

The influence of prophetic books extends into the New Testament. Some prophecies point to a future time along with New Testament prophecies.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the prophetic books form a logical transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

## I. Timetable of Old Testament prophets who left writings behind

	Prophet	Begin of ministry	Era	Current king	Recipient of message
10	1. Obadiah	845 ca?	Assyrian	Joram	Edom
	2. Joel	835?		Joash	Judah
	3. Jonah	782		Amaziah	Nineveh
	4. Hosea	760		Uzziah	Israel
15	5. Amos	760		Uzziah	Israel
	6. Isaiah	739		Uzziah, Jotham	Judah
	7. Micah	735		Ahaz, Hezekiah	Judah and Israel
20	8. Nahum	650	Babylonian	Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah	Israel
	9. Zephaniah	640		Manasseh	Nineveh
	10. Jeremiah	627		Josiah	Judah
25	11. Habakkuk	609	Exilic	Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah	Judah
	12. Daniel	605		Josiah	Judah
	13. Ezekiel	593		Jehoiakim	Babylon
30	14. Haggai	520	Post-exilic	Zedekiah	Prisoners of Judah in Babylon
	15. Zechariah	520		Zerubbabel	Judah
	16. Malachi	433		Zerubbabel	Judah

Scholars strongly disagree about the authorship date for Joel and Obadiah. The problem is that neither of these books mentions kings or a date (or an era).

The following two dates are suggested for the authorship of **Obadiah**:

1. Passages and arguments that support an authorship date around 845 BC: Joram reigned over Judah between 848 and 841 BC. During this time, the Philistines and Arabs invaded Judah and

<sup>12</sup> For prophetic texts in the N.T., see e.g. Mat 24; Rom 11:25ff; 1Co 15:22ff; 1Th 4:14-17; 2Th 2; 2Pe 3; Rev 4 to 22 etc.

pillaged Jerusalem (cf. 2Ch 21:16-17; Joe 3:3-6; Amo 1:6.11-12). The Edomites were especially bitter enemies of Judah during this time (cf. 2Ki 8:20-22; 2Ch 21:8-10).

2. Passages and arguments that support an authorship date around 586 BC: Proponents for this date believe that Obadiah prophesied right up to the time after the fall of Jerusalem in 596 BC. They base this claim on the spiteful glee of the Edomites when Judah was conquered and Jerusalem destroyed: cf. Lam 4:21-22; Eze 25:12-14; 35:1-9; 36:5.

### **Possible dating for the authorship of Joel:**

- 10 Joel refers to earlier enemies of Israel (Philistines, Phoenicians, Edomites and Egyptians: see 3:4.19), but not Syrians (whom Amos had mentioned previously), Babylonians and Assyrians. Joel would certainly have mentioned these nations if they had already posed a threat during that time. From this one could conclude that Joel wrote before Amos at about 835 BC during the reign of Joash. Perhaps it is significant that Joel makes no note of a king from Israel or Judah but refers to priests several times (cf. 1:9.13; 2:17) and elders (cf. 1:14; 2:16), which could indicate that priests occupied an ascendant position during this time. This would also support the hypothesis that Joel wrote during the time of the priest Jehoiada, who feared God and was the guardian of young King Joash (cf. 2Ch 22:10–24:16). Furthermore, the position of the Book of Joel within the Hebrew canon (between Hosea and Amos) supports this earlier date. However, this argument is not necessarily compelling. Other scholars prefer a date between **597 and 586 BC**. The enemy in this case would have been Babylon (and Nebuchadnezzar).<sup>13</sup> The **day of the Lord** in the Book of Joel would then correspond to the passages from Lam 1:12; 2:1.21-22; Eze 7:19; 13:5 and Zep 2:2-3. This would also explain the reference to Javan (Greece) in Joe 3:6 (cf. Eze 27:13, which was also written during the time of the Babylonian exile). Yet, Joel 2:18-19 seems to contradict an exilic date as the passage mentions the repentance of the Jewish people, which would not fit to Judah during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Other scholars even prefer a post-exilic date, which would necessitate a date after 516 BC after the reconstruction of the temple (cf. the prophets Haggai and Zechariah). Elders are mentioned in 1:2 and 2:16 instead of a king. Indeed, Israel did not have a king after the exile. However, it must be noted that the reference to the slave sale in Joe 3:6 would more appropriately fit to 600 BC or 800 BC than to 500 BC. Other critical scholars even consider a date in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The choice between approx. 600 BC or approx. 800 BC seems problematic; an editorial date later than 500 BC is unlikely.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> One could object by saying that the temple was only destroyed in about 586 BC. Yet, it is still mentioned in Joe 1:9.13; 2:17, which would indeed suggest an earlier authorship date.

<sup>14</sup> See also Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., 'Joel' in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty, Old Testament*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1985), pp. 1409-1412 and the discussion about Joel by Gleason L. Archer in *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), pp. 338-341.

## II. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Firstly, we would like to recommend the short introduction for the prophet Isaiah by Derek Kidner in the New Bible Commentary Revised.<sup>15</sup>

### A. Isaiah and his time

#### 5 1. His name

His exact name is “*Yešayahu*” (יֵשַׁעְיָהוּ) and means “*Yahweh is Saviour*” or “*Yahweh saves*” or “*Yahweh is the one who saves*”.

#### 2. His origins

- His father was Amoz (1:1).
- 10 • According to Jewish tradition, Amoz, the father of Isaiah, was a brother to King Amaziah (who again was the father of King Uzziah). Thus, Isaiah came from royalty.
- Isaiah performed his ministry during the reign of several kings of Judah (cf. Isa 1:1).

#### 3. His time

- 15 • He prophesied during the reign of four kings from about 740 to 685 BC, i.e. for about 55 years! We know his ministry stretched from 740 BC, the year in which King Uzziah died (cf. Isa 6:1), to at least the reign of the Assyrian King Sennacherib (cf. Isaiah chapter 36–39; 2Ki 18–19) in 702 BC, thus lasting at least 39 years.
- 20 • 2Ch 26:22 reveals that Isaiah edited the annals; he was a historian. Some interpreters believe that 2Ki 20:7 (cf. Isa 38:21) indicates that Isaiah was also a physician. However, this appears to be nothing more than speculation since other servants of God could also have carried out these practices without necessarily being physicians: cf. Jam 5:14.

#### 4. His family

- He was married (8:3).
- 25 • He had two sons: *Shear-Jashub*, which means “*a remnant will return*” (cf. 7:3) and *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*, which means “*speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder*” (cf. 8:2-3).
- His ministry, together with the ministry of his sons, was a sign for Israel (8:18).

<sup>15</sup> Derek Kidner, “*Isaiah*” in The New Bible Commentary Revised, edited by Donald Guthrie and J. Alec Motyer, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 588-591.



## 5. Contemporary prophets

- Micah: about 735 to 715 BC (for Israel and Judah).
- Hosea: about 760 to 715 BC (for the Northern Kingdom of Israel).

## 6. His death

- 5
- The Bible does not mention his death.
  - According to Jewish tradition Isaiah fled from King Manasseh because he had sentenced him to death. Manasseh was angry at Isaiah because he dared to speak the truth. Pursued by the king's soldiers, he is said to have hidden in the trunk of a tree, and Manasseh is said to have given the order to saw through the tree trunk (with the prophet inside). Presumably the note in Heb 11:37 refers to this event.
- 10

## 7. Explicit quotations of his name

- 2Ki 19:20: 13 x
- 2Ch 26 and 32: 3 x
- In the Book of Isaiah: 16 x
- 15 • In the gospels: 13 x
- In Acts: 3 x
- In Romans: 4 x

20 Besides these numerous references to his name, the Book of Isaiah itself is mentioned in several passages in the New Testament without explicitly stating his name. Allusions to texts in the Book of Isaiah are also made (especially in the Book of Revelation). Only the Psalms are quoted more often in the New Testament than Isaiah!

## 8. Historical context

### a.) World powers that especially influenced Israel during the time of Isaiah

25

#### (1) Assyria

- Kings: Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727); Salmanassar V (727-722); Sargon II (722-705) and Sennacherib (705-681 BC).
- These kings were notorious for their cruelty, perpetrated by means of their armies.
- 30 • Judah was initially an ally of Assyria against the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria (Damascus) because these kingdoms had formed an alliance against Judah.
- All of Judah was occupied under Sennacherib (46 cities). Jerusalem was an exception (cf. Isa 37:26). God intervened supernaturally, killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. Isa 37:36). The soldiers presumably died from the plague.
- 35 • At first, Hezekiah paid tribute to Assyria: see 2Ki 18:13-16.
- The Babylonians destroyed the Assyrian capital Nineveh about 612 BC.

**(2) Egypt**

- Israel and Egypt had a relationship since the time of Solomon, also because of Solomon's marriage to the pharaoh's daughter (cf. 1Ki 9:16).
- Judah sought help in Egypt during the time of Isaiah (cf. Isa 30–31: esp. 30:2).
- 5 • The Babylonians defeated Egypt in the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC.

**b.) Isaiah performed his ministry throughout three eras and the reign of four different kings****(1) Uzziah and Jotham 792-736 BC**

10 Jotham ruled from 750 BC (his father Uzziah was punished by God with leprosy). Uzziah died in 739 BC. During this time, Judah was very rich and powerful. Judah subdued Edom and the Philistines, but spiritually Judah was in a dire state (cf. Isa 1 and 5)!

**(2) The reign of Ahaz 735–716 BC**

- Ahaz was a godless and idolatrous king.
- The Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria tried to destroy Judah.
- 15 • Ahaz relied on the support of Assyria (cf. chapter 7).

**(3) Hezekiah 716–687 BC**

- He was a pious king.
- The worship of Yahweh was reinstated during his reign.
- 20 • The land of Judah was occupied by the Assyrians while Jerusalem was spared by supernatural intervention (cf. Isa 36–37 and 2Ki 18–19).

**c.) Spiritual evaluation of the political situation at the time**

Israel (i.e. Judah) was surrounded by three superpowers: Egypt, Assyria and Babylon (the latter under Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century). Besieged by these mighty rulers, Judah could only maintain its independence by distancing itself from them and trusting in the help of God alone.

25 However, such a state of trust required absolute faith in God, which none of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel nor, to a large extent, the kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah possessed. The life and actions of King Ahaz (to just mention one) reveal this regrettable fact. When it came to politics, most of Judah's kings relied on one of the two world powers, either Egypt or Assyria. Time and again, this behaviour provoked invasions by these powers so that the lands of

30 Israel and Judah were a perpetual battlefield until they were eventually completely conquered by the Chaldeans (the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom). As Isaiah was in close communication with both the temple and the king's palace, he was always up to date on domestic and foreign affairs. On account of his key position in the kingdom and the fact that he was a true prophet, Isaiah was well aware of the people's situation and their future fate.

## B. The authenticity of the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah was generally acknowledged as the author of the entire Book of Isaiah until a little more than 200 years ago. However, gradually Bible critics began to question the authenticity of certain parts of the book. The first attack on its authenticity was the claim that chapter 40–66 were written about 150 to 200 years after the time of Isaiah by an anonymous author.<sup>16</sup> The critics named this “anonymous author” “*Deutero-Isaiah*”.<sup>17</sup> Soon critics also talked about a “*Trito-Isaiah*”.<sup>18</sup> And other editors were also suggested soon after that. The texts that modern biblical criticism (perhaps) still attributes to Isaiah are the following: 1:1-26; 2:1.6-21; 3:1-25; 4:1; 5:1-6.13; 7:1-13.18-25; 8:1-22; 9:7 to 10:4; 28:1-22 (not even a fifth of the book). One of these extremely sceptical scholars is Otto Kaiser who expresses his criticism in the introduction to his Isaiah commentary.<sup>19</sup> He attributes even fewer passages to the Isaiah of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These scholars suggest ten or more different authors (and/or glossators) for the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse alone (i.e. chapters 24–27).<sup>20</sup>

It is important to note that the proponents of biblical criticism (*haute critique*) do not even agree amongst themselves. Many of these hypotheses fundamentally contradict each other.<sup>21</sup> But why is the authorship question so important for this book since several other authors of Old Testament books also remain unknown (or their identities are uncertain)?<sup>22</sup> The reason for this is that the New Testament explicitly attributes this book (all three parts) to Isaiah. Several passages from the second and third part of Isaiah (as well) (i.e. chapters 40–55 and 56–66) are attributed to Isaiah in the New Testament: as e.g. in Mat 3:3; 8:17; 12:18-21; Luk 3:4; Joh 1:23; 12:38; Rom 10:16.20-21. Therefore, the authenticity of the words of Jesus and the apostles (and thus the authenticity of the entire New Testament) are called into question.

### 1. Some objections from critics and our responses

#### a.) The content of chapters 40–66 differs from chapters 1–39

**Our response:** Why can an author not deal with two separate topics in one book? Does the historical parenthesis with its division into two parts (chapters 36–37 = *historic* referring to *Assyria* and chapters 38–39 *prophetic* referring to *Babylon*) not already signal a topical change? Furthermore, it must be noted that both parts (also) contain statements that correspond to the main topic of the other respective part: compare e.g. the topic of “*grace and Israel’s restoration*” in

<sup>16</sup> Early criticism by Ioannes Christophorus Doederlein, *ESAIAS ex recensione Textus Hebraei ad Fidem Codicum Manuscriptorum et Versionum Antiquarum latine vertit notasque varii argumenti*, Editio Tertium Recognita (Norimbergae et Altdorfi: G. P. Monath., [1775] 1789) and subsequently more explicitly by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Vol. 4, 4<sup>th</sup> original edition (Göttingen: Carl Eduard Rosenbusch, 1824).

<sup>17</sup> I.e. “the second Isaiah”.

<sup>18</sup> I.e. “the third Isaiah”. Chapter 40–55 are allegedly the work of Deutero-Isaiah, chapters 56–66 of Trito-Isaiah.

<sup>19</sup> Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 13–39*, in *Das Alte Testament Deutsch. Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk*, ed. Otto Kaiser and Lothar Perlitt. Volume 18, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) and in his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament: Eine Einführung in ihre Ergebnisse und Probleme*, 5<sup>th</sup> revised edition (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Otto Ludwig, *Die Stadt in der Jesaja-Apokalypse: Zur Datierung von Jes. 24-27* Inaugural dissertation to receive the honour of a doctorate in theology at the evang.-theol. faculty of the Rhenish Friedrich-Wilhelms University Bonn. Cologne: Walter Kleikamp, 1961.

<sup>21</sup> The hypotheses are reminiscent of the various so-called source analysis hypotheses on the Pentateuch.

<sup>22</sup> Examples: The books Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ruth, Judges and Esther...

chapters 11–12 in the first part with chapters 46–47 in the second part and chapter 63 in the third part of the book. The topic of “*judgment*” (most certainly the main topic of chapters 1–39) also appears in the second part (allegedly by the so-called Deutero-Isaiah) and in the third part of the book (allegedly by Trito-Isaiah): judgment in the first part: chap. 1; 3; 5–10; 13–23; 28–31; 34. The call to repentance in the second part: e.g. chapters 48, 51–52 and the justified judgment that is to be carried out by the Servant of the Lord (i.e. the Messiah): chapter 53. Judgment in the third part of the book: chapters 57–59 and 63–64. The conclusion of the book in 66:15–24 is characteristic: It contains both topics (judgment and restoration). One could summarise it as follows: *through judgment to salvation*. And these are precisely the topics in chapters 1–39.

## b.) The style of chapters 40–66 is different from chapters 1–39

**Our response:** One should not forget that style and vocabulary depend on the topic. Critics themselves affirm (whether directly or indirectly) that there are many similarities in style and choice of words for both (or all three) parts. The following is an example of parallel vocabulary: The name of God “*Holy One of Israel*” appears rarely outside of the Book of Isaiah. One could even characterise this name as typically “Isaiahnic”. It appears 29 times in the Book of Isaiah; almost half of these occurrences are in the second and third part (i.e. in chapters 40–55 and 56–66).

## c.) Chapters 40–66 must have been written during the Babylonian exile and/or after the exile

**Our response:** According to Bible critics, this would mean that the second part of the book was written at least 150 years after Isaiah and the third part even later as these chapters state that Jerusalem was already destroyed, the country devastated and the people of God scattered. Though these observations about Israel’s situation (especially concerning Jerusalem) are true, they do not justify the conclusion of critical interpreters who claim that chapters 40–66 were written later than chapters 1–39. The critics are echoing the belief system of liberal rationalism, which denies the reality of (divine) prophecy (caused by the Holy Spirit: cf. 2Pe 1:21). There are also many other prophecies that use the present or even the past tense to describe future events (see e.g. Deu 32; Hos 13; compare with Isa 14:2; Joe 1; 2:15). Some critics even admit this for certain passages (also e.g. Skinner and Driver): e.g. for 5:13–15 and 9:1–23. The phenomenon of the prophetic perfect tense (*perfectum propheticum*) also occurs in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation of John. Future events are described with the aorist indicative (e.g. Rev 19:1ff; 20:1ff; 21:1ff). The most striking example can be found in Rev 21:6 where John announces God’s promise of a New Creation in the perfect tense: “*It is done!*”<sup>23</sup>

## d.) Isaiah could not have known about the name and actions of the Persian King Cyrus

Indeed, Isaiah was at the height of his ministry in approx. 700 BC while Cyrus’ defeat of the Babylonians occurred about 539 BC (about 160 years after Isaiah); the Book of Isaiah alludes to Cyrus’ victory in the passages Isa 44:28 and 45:1ff.

**Our response:** Most certainly Isaiah could not have prophesied about these events... unless he spoke under the influence (inspiration) of the Holy Spirit, i.e. God revealed it to him through his

<sup>23</sup> In Greek “*gegonan*” (γεγοναν): It is *Perfect II* of the verb *ginomai* = *to become*. God reveals to John the (coming) creation of a New Heaven, a New Earth and a New Jerusalem and states: “*It is done.*” (Actually a plural: “*They are done.*”). Of course, all these three “things” do not yet exist today. God is absolutely certain of their future existence and therefore lets his prophet announce these events in the perfect tense; a tense used in Greek for absolute certainty and fixed results. We therefore refer to this tense as the “prophetic perfect”.

Spirit. This is the decisive issue where liberal (critical) theology reveals its true nature: disbelief characterised by rationalism that aims to exclude supernatural phenomena. Yet, this is precisely the nature of true prophecy: It originates from God alone.<sup>24</sup> We find numerous prophecies in the Old Testament that have already been fulfilled to the last detail, especially regarding the first coming of Christ; there are, however, also other ones. Here just one example: The future reign of King Josiah and even his name were revealed about 300 years before his birth (cf. 1Ki 13:1-2). We are, of course, fully aware that liberal theology denies this and claims an authorship date for these prophecies in the Book of Kings **after**<sup>25</sup> the time of Josiah.

## 2. Confirmations for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah

### 10 a.) External proof for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah

#### (1) The Septuagint declares that Isaiah was the author of the entire Book of Isaiah

The LXX<sup>26</sup> does not mention an alleged Deutero or (even) a Trito-Isaiah.

#### (2) Josephus states that Cyrus knew about the prophecy concerning him

The only explanation for this would be that Isaiah made these statements before the time of Cyrus.

### 15 (3) Isaiah scrolls found in Qumran do not confirm the hypothesis of Bible critics

Isaiah scrolls, among other writings, were found in the caves of Qumran, which contain the entire book of the prophet Isaiah. They date back to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. These scrolls do not confirm the hypothesis of a Deutero or (even) a Trito-Isaiah. One of the scrolls contains the entire Book of Isaiah in the Hebrew language. The book was written on 17 animal skins that were sewn together.

20 The text from 38:8 to 40:2 was written on one of these 17 animal skins! If chapters 40–66 (or 40–55 and 56–66) were written by a different author, one would expect one writing to end with 39:8 and the following one to begin with 40:1.

#### (4) The apocryphal book Jesus Sirach apparently also attributes the entire book to Isaiah

25 The author of the apocryphal (deutero-canonical) book Sirach, Jesus son of Sirach (Hebrew: Ben Sira) alludes to chapters 40–66 of Isaiah in 48:24 (*“By his dauntless spirit he saw the future and comforted the mourners in Zion”*) and attributes these words (mentioned in Sir 48:20-24) to Isaiah.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> And God insists on this truth in the Book of Isaiah: cf. 41:20; 42:9; 44:6-7; 45:6-11; 48:3.

<sup>25</sup> This is referred to as a *“vaticinium post eventum”* (i.e. a “prophecy” pronounced **after** the announced event or *“vaticinium ex eventu”* (i.e. a “prophecy” pronounced at the same time as the announced event). Yet, it is exactly this rationalistic claim by Bible critics (i.e. their apriori) that we cannot accept because it excludes divine inspiration and reduces the Bible to mere “human words” (instead of God’s words) just like any other religious book.

<sup>26</sup> The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which dates to approx. 250 BC (written in Alexandria, Egypt).

<sup>27</sup> Compare note in *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible TOB*, édition intégrale, Ancien Testament (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf et Les Bergers et les Mages, 1977), p. 2207: “Allusion to Isa 40–66, which Ben Sirach believed to be from the

## b.) Internal proof for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah

### (1) The N.T. contains 9 quotes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 40–66) in which the name Isaiah is explicitly mentioned

Here is a list of passages from chapters 40–66 from the Book of Isaiah, which are explicitly attributed to Isaiah:

- Isa 40:3: quoted in Mat 3:3; Mar 1:2-3; Joh 1:23
- Isa 40:3-5: quoted in Luk 3:4-6
- Isa 42:1-4: quoted in Mat 12:17-21
- Isa 53:1: Rom 10:16
- Isa 53:4: Mat 8:17
- Isa 53:7-8: Act 8:32-33
- Isa 65:1: Rom 10:20

As already mentioned above, we want to emphasise one of these passages that particularly interests us: **Joh 12:38-41**. These verses provide a weighty argument:

- Verse 38 is a quote from Isa 53:1
- Verse 40 is a quote from Isa 6:9-10<sup>28</sup>

Jesus quotes both parts of the Book of Isaiah and thereby attributes both to Isaiah. Can we really believe that Jesus, the Son of God, was wrong? Or was he aware of the error and did not tell us? In our opinion, this would be inconceivable because the words of the Lord are pure and infallible.

### (2) Critics do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the (alleged) anonymity of Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah

If, indeed, the Bible critics are right, then arguably the most important prophet of the Old Testament (Deutero-Isaiah according to critics) would have added his writings to Isaiah's writings (also called Proto-Isaiah by critics), which were less important in comparison. Chapters 40–66 are indeed more "important"<sup>29</sup> for us in regard to prophecy than chapters 1–39! As mentioned, the critics do not have an explanation for this "silence".

### (3) Structure and order testify to the unity of the entire book

The Book of Isaiah is teleological; it is written according to an exact plan and purpose from beginning to end:

**1<sup>st</sup> part chap. 1–39:** A descendant of David still reigns in Jerusalem. However, judgement cannot be averted because the house of David and the people have turned away from Yahweh (just as their

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same author as the rest of the book." (Original text: "Allusion à Es 40–66 qui pour Ben Sir est du même auteur que le reste du livre.")

<sup>28</sup> Compare also John A. Martin, 'Isaiah' in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture by Dallas Seminary Faculty, Old Testament*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1985), p. 1030.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. chap. 53, which is especially important for Christology and Soteriology.

brothers before them in the Northern Kingdom). The prophet Isaiah is commissioned to announce an imminent exile: Isa 5:13; 6:11-13; 39:5-7. Zedekiah was the last King of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar ordered his eyes gouged out (because of his rebellion) while Jehoiakim, after being deposed and taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, was pardoned by him (2Ki 25; 2Ch 36). He, however, did not return to Jerusalem. As already mentioned, there would not be another king to occupy the throne in Israel with, of course, the exception of Jesus of Nazareth. He, however, was rejected by his own people (cf. Joh 1:11; 18:36; Luk 19:14.27). The Messianic King is constantly contrasted with the rebellious house of David in Isa 1–39.<sup>30</sup> He is the Neo-David who will restore Israel and reign on Zion in Jerusalem. We see two parallels in chapters 1–39: The focus is less and less on the house of David of that time (Isa 39:7), and his descendants are replaced by the coming Neo-David (Isa 9:5; 11:1.10; 22:22; cf. 2Sa 7:12-16; Jer 23:5; Eze 34:23-24; 37:24-27; Luk 1:27-33, etc.).<sup>31</sup>

**2<sup>nd</sup> part: chap. 40–55:** The prophet anticipates the exile of the children of Israel.<sup>32</sup> Israel no longer has prophets or a temple. The house of David is not mentioned anymore; only the New Covenant, i.e. the “*everlasting covenant . . . my faithful love promised to David*” is announced (Isa 55:3; cf. 37:35) in chapter 55, which is a transition chapter. According to the prophet’s perspective, the events described in these chapters are still to come. Israel is called “*Jacob’s servant*”, or simply “*servant*”. As chapters 1–39 contrast the coming king with the King of Jerusalem (Judah), chapters 40–55 present the people of Israel as the servant in exile – because of their sin – in contrast to another servant, “the Servant of the Lord”, i.e. the Messiah, who – as we know – is without sin (Isa 53:9; cf. 2Co 5:21).<sup>33</sup> It is simply wrong to identify *the servant* as Israel in all these passages.

In this second part, the focus is not only on Cyrus as the chosen deliverer, but *Yahweh’s servant* is also identified as the redeemer. Let us analyse the section Isa 42:1-17 in detail: The Spirit of Yahweh rests on him; he will bring justice to the nations and be a light for them. This is, undoubtedly, an allusion to Christ’s first coming and not to the people of Israel as a whole (compare Isa 42:1-4 with Mat 12:18-21). Yahweh’s servant here cannot possibly be Israel because he is called

<sup>30</sup> His first coming, his character and his work are often announced in flashes: A virgin will give birth to him (Isa 7:14; cf. Mat 1:23; Gen 3:15). Thanks to him, Zebulon and Naphtali (i.e. Galilee: Isa 8:23 to 9:1; cf. Mat 4:13-16) will see the light. The male child is divine for he is to be called “*Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*”, and he will reign on David’s throne (Isa 9:5-6, cf. 2Sa 7:12-17; Luk 1:27-35) since he is from David’s family (Isa 11:1.10; 22:22; cf. Rom 1:3; 15:12). In chapters 7–11, he is contrasted with the ungodly King Ahab who was ripe for judgement. In chapters 13–23, he is the coming sovereign judge. In Isaiah’s Apocalypse (Isa 24–27), the prophet beholds him as ruler in Jerusalem (cf. Isa 24:23; 27:13).

<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the first part of Isaiah’s book was obviously (chap. 1–39) to draw a contrast between the coming Neo-David and the godless King of Judah, who represented his people, in order to show that the final restoration was only possible through the coming Neo-David. Two observations confirm that this was truly Isaiah’s purpose: 1. Characteristically, the announcement of the successor to the throne of David in chapters 13–23 (which speaks about the judgement of the nations) is found in chapter 22, which talks about the house of Judah (cf. Isa 22:22 and Rev 3:7) 2. The first part of the book (chap. 1–39) ends with 39:6-7 in which the exile of the people and the sons of the royal lineage is announced.

<sup>32</sup> But this does not mean that he himself will be in exile. The denunciation of idolatry (cf. Isa 57:3-12; 65:3-7.11; 66:3.17) speaks against such a *sociological setting* after the return from Babylonian exile because, after this period (the Babylonian exile), the Jewish people are no longer explicitly accused of idolatry. It would also not make sense for the prophet to talk about God’s “accusations” and “anger” towards his people in Isa 57:16 because this problem will only be resolved after the people repent. At this point in time, the people are still called upon to repent (Isa 56:1ff; 58:1ff, 59:2ff).

<sup>33</sup> The thematic congruence between the first, second and third part of the Book of Isaiah is striking. Chapter 42 provides a transitional bridge for the statements in chapters 49–55. The passage Isa 42:7 confirms Isa 35:5 and points to Isa 61:1. The *servant* is the same as the person who is mentioned in Isa 35:4-5 and 61:1 (cf. Isa 42:7; 49:9), namely the Messiah, who will free his own from sin. Compare also Isa 53:2 with 11:1-2.10: The Messiah is described as a *tender shoot* or a *root*.

to bring Israel back to Yahweh (cf. Isa 49:5-6)!<sup>34</sup> Israel can hardly be the mediator of the New Covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8). Rather this refers to the incarnate Son of God (cf. the New Testament: 1Ti 2:5; Heb 9:15; 12:24; see also Mat 26:28; Luk 22:20). He will bring light to the nations (Isa 42:6). Yahweh's servant, the Messiah, who was, is and remains sinless (Isa 53:9-12; cf. Joh 8:46; 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1Pe 1:19; 2:22-25; 3:18), who died for our sins as a substitute for our punishment (our death) (cf. Isa 53:11: "*and he will bear their iniquities*").<sup>35</sup> Compare this with Isa 26:21a (affliction and punishment of the earth's inhabitants on account of their sins) and Isa 27:9 (Jacob's sin), also Isa 64:9 (Yahweh will not remember the sins of his people forever). Yahweh's servant washes away this sin by dying a substitutional death. Iniquity weighs so heavily on the earth that it collapses and cannot get up (Isa 24:20). The transgressors must die (Isa 1:2.28; 50:1; 66:24), but Yahweh's servant comes to wash away the sins (cf. Isa 43:1.25; 44:22) by taking them on himself (Isa 53:5.8.12).<sup>36</sup>

While the "Servant of the Lord", the Messiah, voluntarily offers his back to his tormentors (Isa 50:4-6), Israel, while in exile, is beaten across the back by its tormentors (due to Israel's sin; Isa 51:22-23).

**3<sup>rd</sup> part: chap. 56–66:** All who repent<sup>37</sup> may participate in the feast on mount Zion. The prophet already beholds Yahweh and his people and those from the nations who turned to him on the mountain (of Zion). With whom is the Lord contrasted in this third part of the book? Why is the word root מלך (*malak* = *king, to be king, rule*) no longer applied to Yahweh in this part (but only used for the kings of the nations!)? Why is David's name not mentioned? Why does this section not include the expressions *the shoot of Jesse, the root, Immanuel, Jacob's servant*?<sup>38</sup> The expression "*servant*" is no longer used when talking about the mediator (cf. Isa 59:15-17; 63:5-7). **He is simply called Yahweh. Why? Because the prophet no longer has to contrast the Lord with any human person whom he is to replace (the kings of Judah or Israel in chapters 1–39) or represent (as Yahweh's servant for Jacob's servant in chapters 40–55) as was the case in the first two parts of the book.** There is no mention of a king of Israel (or Judah). The Lord himself is also no longer addressed as "king" in this third part of the book. It is no longer necessary to indicate that the king has begun his reign because **theocracy will (finally) be an established reality.**

Yahweh is both king and high priest. His house, his house of prayer, i.e. his temple, has been established, and priests perform their ministry. As in Eze 40–48 (a passage that undoubtedly also

<sup>34</sup> See likewise Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Towards an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 215-217.

<sup>35</sup> Of course, the servant, who is a light to the nations and, as the righteous one, dies for the unrighteous, cannot be Israel because the (Jewish) people were to be sent into exile on account of their iniquity and sin (cf. Isa 5:13; 6:7-12; 27:7-9, etc.). Only Yahweh's servant can die a substitutional death for the people because he is without sin (cf. Isa 53:9-12; see also Isa 59:16; 63:5). He himself has not merited death, contrary to the people of Israel. Even the prophet himself, though called by God, is not without sin (cf. Isa 6:5-7)!

<sup>36</sup> It would exceed the framework of this paper to list all of the New Testament passages that refer to Jesus Christ as the prophetic fulfilment of Isa 53. I will limit myself to mentioning Luk 22:37 and Mar 10:45. For a detailed argumentation and Christological interpretation of Isa 53, I recommend Hans Walter Wolff, *Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (reprint of the 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition of the Evangelische Verlags-Anstalt, Berlin, 1952), Giessen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1984. Concerning Isa 53, see also Oswalt T. Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah: A Study in Prophecy* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), pp. 87ff.

<sup>37</sup> The people are greatly afflicted; the temple in Jerusalem has been trampled down by the godless (Isa 63:18), and the town has been devastated (Isa 64:9-10). Incidentally, this provides further proof that this part of the book cannot be the work of a so called post-exilic author as many critical commentators and exegetes insist (referring to a *Trito-Isaiah*). It is true that the second temple (known as the post-exilic temple) was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes (164 BC), but he did not burn it down. The Romans, however, did burn down the temple much later around 70 AD. This is one of the reasons why we have concluded that this part of the book must have the same origin as Isa 5:13; 6:11-12; 40–48: The prophet predicts the Babylonian exile as Yahweh's punishment for the godlessness and idolatry of the people (Isa 65:2-7.11).

<sup>38</sup> "*Servant*" in the singular no longer appears in this part of the book; only the plural word form is used for those who are faithful to Yahweh (used seven times in the Hebrew text in Isa 65:8-15).



Isaiah.05.2022

refers to the Messianic Kingdom), high priests are not mentioned. The crucified and risen Christ will be prophet, high priest and king in this temple. **Prophet** – because righteousness and law will go out from him (cf. Isa 2:3-4; Mic 4:2). **High priest** – because he paid the price for his people through his sacrifice (cf. Isa 53), and when he returns (Isa 59:20-21; cf. Zec 14:3-5), he will return as the one whom men have pierced (Isa 53:5; cf. Zec 12:10; Rev 1:7). He accepted the *servant* position when men looked upon him as he hung on the cross (Joh 19:37). Upon his return, people will once again look upon him as the one whom they have pierced (Rev 1:7). He will be Lord of lords and King of kings (cf. Rev 19:16). In other words, he left glory behind (cf. Isa 9:5; Joh 17:5), came to earth and was obedient unto death (Isa 53:5-12; Phi 2:6ff; 2Co 8:9), and then the Father exalted him above all things (cf. Isa 52:13; Phi 2:9). The Son is both Messiah and Lord (cf. Act 2:34-36). He will return to finally take his place *among the people*, a position that had always been his eternal destiny (the actual meaning of the name *Immanuel* = *God with us*).

**These two parallel progressions can be traced throughout all three parts of the Book of Isaiah: From glory and exaltation to humiliation and again back to exaltation!** The progression of the people and its God run parallel, but there is one significant difference:

Israel and its king (and ultimately all humankind along with them: cf. Gen 3:1-6; 11:1ff; Rom 5:12; Isa 24:5-6.20) have rebelled. All have abandoned Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, and chose self-exaltation. For this reason, Yahweh must humble and humiliate them by sending them into exile so that they might come to their senses, repent and humble themselves so that Yahweh can again receive and restore them.

**The progression of humankind in the Book of Isaiah:**

**SELF EXALTATION (1–39)**

**EXALTATION BY YAHWEH (56–66)**

**HUMILIATION (40–55)**

This subsequent acceptance and exaltation of humankind is only possible through the work of the Lord, who, according to the message of the prophet Isaiah, came into the world from eternity (Isa 9:5; cf. Mic 5:1 and in the N.T.: Joh 1:1; 17:5.24; Heb 7:1-3) as the royal child (Isa 7:14; 9:5; 11:2.10) and lived as a servant. The people were exiled because of their sin and received blows on their backs (Isa 51:23). Yahweh's servant comes into the world to accept these blows on his back (Isa 50:6) in order to deliver the people. Yahweh's servant humbles himself, takes the sin of humankind upon himself, and is willing to die for the people although he is innocent so as to save those who are trapped in sin. Yet, after this he will live again, see his descendants and reign (compare the words "*he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted*" in Isa 52:13-15 with "*For this is what the high and exalted One says – he who lives forever whose name is holy*" in Isa 57:15). The structure of the book is as follows: The first part of the book (chapters 1–39) portrays the Messiah as the coming king who will strike the wicked with the rod of his mouth (Isa 11:4). In the second part (chap. 40–55), the prophet announces the humiliation and humbling of Yahweh's servant, describing how he bares his back to receive blows (Isa 50:6) as a substitute for the sins of others (Isa 53:5).

**The progression of the Son of God, the Messiah, in the Book of Isaiah:**

**EXALTATION (1–39)**

**SUBSEQUENT EXALTATION (56–66)**

**SELF-HUMILIATION (40–55)**

Paul's exhortation in Phi 2 is also to be understood in this way. We are also called to humble ourselves just as Jesus was ready to relinquish all his privileges and glory (in his Father's presence) by humbling himself in order to be subsequently exalted again by his Father. The Holy Scripture says that God hates pride above all:

5

Jam 4:6 *But he gives us more grace. That is why the Scripture says: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

10

1Pe 5:5-6 *...All of you, cloth yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

15

The entire Book of Isaiah is structured as a contrast. Here some examples: (1) The unfaithful kings of Israel (39:7) are replaced by a pious king (9:5-6; 11:1ff). (2) The unfaithful servant Jacob (Israel) must pay for his sins in exile (43:14ff; 44:1ff; 48:1ff) while the true servant of Yahweh (the Messiah: Isa 42 and 49) takes on the punishment for the sins of the people (Isa 50:4ff; 53:1ff). (3) Babylon falls (Isa 21:9) while Jerusalem is rebuilt and exalted (Isa 26:1; 27:13). (4) The enemies of God's people, the briars and thorns are burned (Isa 27:4) while God's people produce fruit (Isa 27:6), etc.

20

#### **(4) Usage of the same expressions and images in all parts of the Book of Isaiah supports its authenticity**

Here some examples:

25

- The frequently recurring symbol of light.
- The metaphors for labour and giving birth: 13:8; 21:3; 23:4-5; 26:17-18; 33:11; 42:14; 49:21; 54:1; 55:10; 59:4; 66:7-9.<sup>39</sup>

30

- The constantly recurring theme of "rest", "seed", i.e. the *offspring* (compare images *branch*, *womb* or *root*: 1:4; 4:2; 6:13; 11:1; 14:19-20; 17:6; 22:24; 24:6.13; 27:6.10; 41:8; 45:19; 49:6; 53:10; 57:3-4; 60:21; 61:9; 65:9.23).

35

- The theme of the nations' pilgrimage to Mount Zion, Jerusalem and the return of Israel to its land: 2:2-5; 11:10; 14:1-2; 18:7; 25:6-8; 27:13; 35:10; 45:14; 49:22; 60:2ff; 66:18ff.
- The metaphor of the vineyard, the vine and the grapes: 1:8; 5:1-7; 16:10; 27:2-6; 36:17; 37:30; 61:5; 65:21. Compare also the contrast of the wine in 24:7-12 (unbelievers) and 25:6 (believers).
- The theme of the exodus and the flood: 4:5; 7:18; 10:24-26; 11:11-16; 12:1-6 (cf. Exo 15); 24:5-6.18.23 (*the elder*); 26:20; 27:12-13; 43:16-21; 51:9-10; 52:4; 54:9 (Noah); 63:11-14 (Moses). Moab and Edom probably represent all enemies of Israel on account of their animosity towards Israel during the exodus out of Egypt: cf. 25:10 (Moab); 34:5-6 and 63:1 (Edom).

40

- The expression "*for the mouth of the LORD has spoken*" appears once in each part of the Book of Isaiah in 1:20; 40:5 und 58:14. Otherwise only in Micah 4:4, but there as "Yahweh Zebaoth" and not just Yahweh. This is a strong argument for the unity of the entire book.
- The expression "*everlasting covenant*" also appears once in each of the three parts of the Book of Isaiah in 24:5, 55:3 and 61:8. It must be noted that these three passages address all nations or the entire world.

<sup>39</sup> For a list of examples that deal with pregnancy and giving birth, see Marvin A. Sweeney, 'Textual Citations in Isaiah 24-27: Toward an Understanding of the Redactional Function of chapters 24-27 in the Book of Isaiah', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107/1 (1988), p. 48.

## C. The message of the Book of Isaiah

5 God is the *Holy One of Israel*; his people should live holy lives (Isa 6; cf. 1Pe 1:15-16). The people will inevitably be judged if they do not heed the Lord's warnings. Yet, a refined remnant will be spared and saved after the judgments on account of the suffering and substitutional death of God's servant, the Messiah (Isa 53). Salvation will culminate in the coming Messianic Kingdom (cf. Isa 2; 11; 35; 54; 60–61; 65:18ff). In that time, the glory of the Lord will be visible through those he has saved. And, last but not least, his redeemed will behold the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22) while the godless and unbelievers will be damned (Isa 66:24).

### III. COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

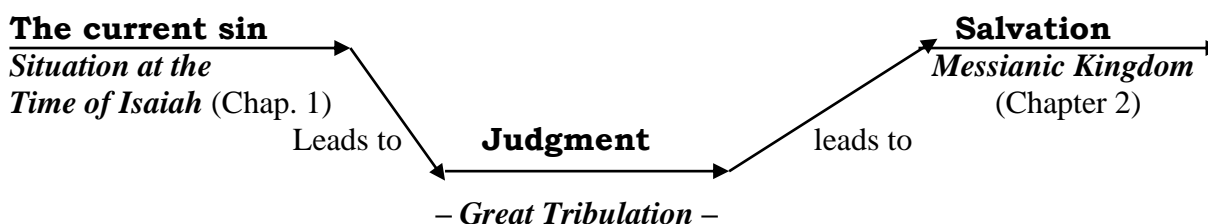
#### A. Self-exaltation: announcement of judgment (exile): chap. 1–39

The first part of the book (chap. 1–39) is mainly an announcement of judgment over Judah and Israel as well as over the peoples along its border (chap. 13–21), and ultimately also over the whole world (chap. 24). The second part of the book (chap. 40–55) deals with the fulfilment of judgment through exile, and the third part (chap. 56–66) mainly focuses on the announcement of restoration and salvation. However, it must be noted that the main theme in each of the three parts is also addressed in the other parts as well. This means:

- In **chapters 1–39**: first and foremost, judgment but also salvation. Examples for the judgment: see 1:24-31; 2:6-22. Examples for salvation: see 2:2-5; 12:1-6.
- In **chapters 40–55**: judgment and salvation. Examples for the judgment: see 47:1-15; 53. Examples for salvation: see 43:1ff; 51:1ff; 52:1ff.
- In **chapters 56–66**: for salvation, refer to: chap. 60–62; 65:17ff. For judgment, refer to: 57:1-13; 59; 63; 65:11-15.

#### 1. Prophecies about Judah and Israel: chap. 1–12

The following diagram illustrates the topic of the first six chapters:



The same also applies to chapter 3 (judgment) and 4 (salvation).

Isaiah denounces the sin of his time. When addressing the judgment, he speaks of the near and distant future, i.e. the Great Tribulation, and the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium) that would follow. Examples:

- Near judgment: 8:1-8 through Assyria.
- Distant judgment (a) 2:12-22: Great Tribulation (cf. Rev 6:16) and (b) 4:2-6: purification and begin of Messianic Kingdom (cf. Rom 11:26).

## a.) Denouncing of sin and announcement of judgment and restoration: chap. 1–6

### (1) Introduction to the book: the people's situation at the time of Isaiah: chap. 1

5 The first chapter is an introduction to the book as a whole. It describes the sin of Israel at the time of the prophets; this sin inevitably leads to God's judgment of the people. The purpose of judgment is the purification of the people. God uses judgment to prepare his people for deliverance and salvation.

#### (a) *The sin of Israel*

10 **V. 1:** The prophecy concerns Judah and Jerusalem. In regard to kings, compare with the introduction above.

#### (i) Images for sin

**V. 2:** Rebelling children.

15 **V. 3:** The people understand less than animals.

**V. 4:** A brood of evildoers, wayward or corrupted children.

20 **Vv. 5-6:** The sick body: The most important organs are sick, from head to toe; all is sick, nothing has been healed or mended!

**Vv. 7-9:** The land is desolate.

25 **V. 10:** They are compared to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (who were eradicated due to their sin: cf. Gen 19; 2Pe 2:6; Jud 7).

**V. 21:** A city that has become a prostitute.

30 **V. 22a:** Silver has become dross.

**V. 22b:** Wine has been diluted with water.

#### (ii) Various sins

35 **V. 21:** Murder.

**V. 23a:** Corrupt leaders, rebels, thieves.

**V. 23b:** Indifference towards orphans and widows.

40 **V. 29:** Idolatry.

**Vv. 11-15:** Hypocrisy: Their heart is far from God (disobedience) although they offer sacrifices, i.e. false, hypocritical worship of God. Compare with Amos 5:21-27; Hos 5:6 and Mic 6:6-8.

**V. 7:** The land has been desolated by foreign armies.

5 **Vv. 8-9:** A small remnant remains alive by the grace of the Lord.

(b) *The alternatives (solution)*

- **Vv. 16-19:** Repentance: If they turn away from sin, God will forgive them. See especially verse 18. We must proclaim this truth: Even murder, the worst of all sins, can be forgiven. But... no forgiveness without repentance: cf. Pro 28:13; Act 2:37-39. Hearing this is frightful and worrisome, but it also gives the sinner (a description that applies to us all) a reason to be joyful and thankful if willing to repent (cf. Isa 59:2; Psa 51:7; Rom 3:10.23; 1Jo 1:8).
- **V. 20:** A person who remains in sin will be judged.

(c) *God's plan of salvation for the people*

15 **Vv. 24-25:** He will purify the people through judgment: the image of metal being melted to purify it from dross.

**Vv. 26-27:** God will establish just judges and councils. These two verses already refer to the Messianic Kingdom, which Isa 2:1-5 talks about.

20 **V. 28:** People who remain in sin will not escape judgment.

## (2) Prophecies concerning judgment and the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 2-4

These are the reasons why we believe Isaiah is prophesying about a distant future:

- He uses technical eschatological terms: “*In the last days*” (2:2), “*in that day*” (2:9.11.17.20; 3:7.18 etc.). 10 times in this passage. The expression “*the day of the Lord [Yahweh]*” occurs 23 times in the entire Bible (cf. 2:12); the expressions “*in that day*” and “*in the last days*” occur about 75 times in the Old Testament. A contextual study of texts that use these terms leads to the conclusion that the “day of the Lord” is characterised by judgment and that it will include the Great Tribulation as well as the Messianic Kingdom (which follows the Great Tribulation).
- The statements in this passage agree with those in other eschatological texts: cf. e.g. Isa 2:19 with Rev 6:16 and Joe 3.
- A prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled but will be fulfilled in the future.

(a) *The glory of the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 2:1-5*

35 **V. 2a:** “*in the coming days*”: We believe that this refers to the time of the Messianic Kingdom.

**V. 2b:** Jerusalem will (then) be the centre of the world.

**V. 3:** The nations will come to Jerusalem: cf. Isa 66:23; Zec 14:16.

40 **V. 4a:** The Lord himself (Yahweh) will judge the nations (cf. Rev 19:11-21: Christ when he returns).

**V. 4b:** There will be worldwide peace (cf. Isa 11; Mic 4:1ff).

**V. 5:** That is why the appeal is made to walk in the light of the Lord so as to be ready for the kingdom (entering into).

(b) *Sin at the time of the prophet: chap. 2:6-8*

The prophet admonishes his generation to break with sin:

**V. 6:** Compromises conceded to other nations (false alliances: cf. Isa 30:1ff).

**V. 7:** Materialism and militarism (violence).

**V. 8:** Idolatry.

(c) *The judgments that precede the Kingdom of Peace ("the day of the Lord"): chap. 2:9 to 4:1*

- The sin of Jerusalem and Judah (3:8), especially the sin of the leaders (3:12) and the women (3:16) will lead to judgment.
- The judgment will shatter all pride: chap. 2:11-17.
- In that day Yahweh alone will be exalted above all (2:11.17 [as it should always be!]), not idols (2:18) nor people (2:22).
- The Lord will bring dread to the entire earth (2:19.21) so that people will try to hide from him (2:19; cf. Rev 6:16).
- Judah and Jerusalem are to be judged (3:1ff): In verses 2-3, all classes are listed, including judges and prophets, even fortune-tellers and magicians. It is very special here that the Prophet says that on that day, boys would rule the land (verse 4). Verse 5 describes civil warlike conditions. It will be so bad that no one wants to be a leader anymore (vv. 6-7). This is reminiscent of the allegory of the trees in Judges 9:7ff.
- The Lord will judge the superiors of the people because they have destroyed the land and exploited the poor. In pictorial language, they are accused of grazing the vineyard (3:14). The vineyard stands for Israel, as the parable of wine in chapter 5 shows (compare Isa 1:8; 27:2-6).
- The Lord will judge the rich, proud women. Their luxury is described in detail through a list of jewellery, perfumes and luxurious dresses. On the Day of Judgment, they will be bald and bared and their husbands will fall in the war (3:16-26).
- There will not be enough men for all the women as many will have died during the war (4:1).

(d) *The effects of judgment: Israel will be purified: chap. 4:2-6*

- ➔ **"A shoot" or "that, which the Lord allows to sprout":** Cf. Isa 11:1, the shoot, the sprout is clearly the Messiah. Jesse was the father of David and Jesus the descendent of David. Only the Messiah's appearance can establish peace and bring about the repentance of his people: cf. on this topic Rom 11:26; Zec 12:10 etc.
- The remnant (those who escaped) of Israel will be purified and enter into the Messianic Kingdom: vv. 3-4.
- The Lord will protect Israel: vv. 5-6. Note the Exodus motif in these verses.

**(3) Reasons for judgment: The parable of the vineyard and the "woe" repeated six times: chap. 5**

Verse 7 is the key to understanding this song of accusation (in the form of a parable). Isaiah is the singer and the "beloved" of God; the vineyard represents Israel. The song has the following meaning:

- God cared greatly for Israel: v. 2a.
- Yet, Israel has failed miserably: v. 2b.
- Israel is guilty – not God: vv. 3-4.

5

The six “woes”, which the prophet proclaims to the people, refer to the bad **grapes the vineyard yielded (instead of good fruit): cf. v. 2.**

10

**Vv. 8–10: 1<sup>st</sup> woe:** Concerns greed. God is the one who judges the harvest. The principle mentioned in Lev 26 and Deu 28 is used here as well (blessing and curse).

**Vv. 11–17: 2<sup>nd</sup> woe:** Sinful pleasures (such as drunkenness and orgies) replace the fear of the Lord.

15

**Vv. 18–19: 3<sup>rd</sup> woe:** Disbelief and blasphemy: The people invite God to judge their sins in a blasphemous manner (→ provocation).

**V. 20: 4<sup>th</sup> woe:** Moral aberration (perversion): Declaring good evil and evil good!

20

**V. 21: 5<sup>th</sup> woe:** Pride, arrogance: Those who think of themselves as wise (cf. 1Co 1:19-31: The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God).

**Vv. 22-23: 6<sup>th</sup> woe:** Against drunkenness and injustice (corruption). The rulers violate the law and enrich themselves (by taking bribes).

25

**Vv. 24-30:** Verses 24 and 25 begin with “therefore”, which means that all these sins will inevitably bring about judgment. The description of judgments carried out by a pagan nation can be applied to all nations whom God used throughout history to judge or discipline Israel. V. 25: The expression “yet for all this, his anger is not turned away” appears again (4x) in 9:12.17.21 and 10:4.

#### **(4) Vision and calling of Isaiah: chap. 6**

30

**V. 1:** Isaiah’s vision: → ***The year Uzziah died:*** This was the year 740 BC. Isaiah may have had this vision when he first began his ministry or it was a confirmation of his earlier calling. Isa 1:1 could be interpreted as an indication that Isaiah had already been called before this vision. Whom did Isaiah see in his vision sitting on the throne? God the Father? We do not think so since no man has ever seen God face to face. A human cannot see God and live (cf. Exo 33:20; 1Ti 6:16 etc.). Joh 12:41 tells us that Isaiah saw the pre-existing Christ on the throne (before his incarnation). Therefore, this vision can be called a Christophany.<sup>40</sup>

35

**V. 2:** This is the only passage in the Bible (O.T. and N.T.) where the *seraphim* are mentioned.

40

**V. 3:** The ***triple holiness*** of God: About the holiness of God, cf. Lev 11:44; 19:2; 1Pe 1:15-16.

**V. 4-7:** cf. Rev 15:8:

45

- Isaiah beholds the Lord: exalted and holy: vv. 1-4.
- He sees himself: as sinful and unworthy: vv. 5-7.

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<sup>40</sup> Just as it was the case when Yahweh appeared to Abraham: cf. Gen 18:22; 19:24; 17:22 (In this passage, the name of God, Elohim, is even given referring to the person whom Abraham saw). Also for Moses in Exo 3:1ff, where the Angel of the Lord is identified as Yahweh (compare Exo 3:2 with Exo 3:4: He is at the same time the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!). The same applies to the *commander of the army of the LORD* in Jos 5:13-15.



- He sees his people: in its sinful state: vv. 8-13.

**V. 8:** ➔ *“And who will go for us?”*: This may be a reference to the trinity of God, i.e. the plurality within the godhead (cf. Gen 1:26, 11:7; N.T.: cf. Mat 28:19; Joh 10:30; 2Co 13:13 etc.).

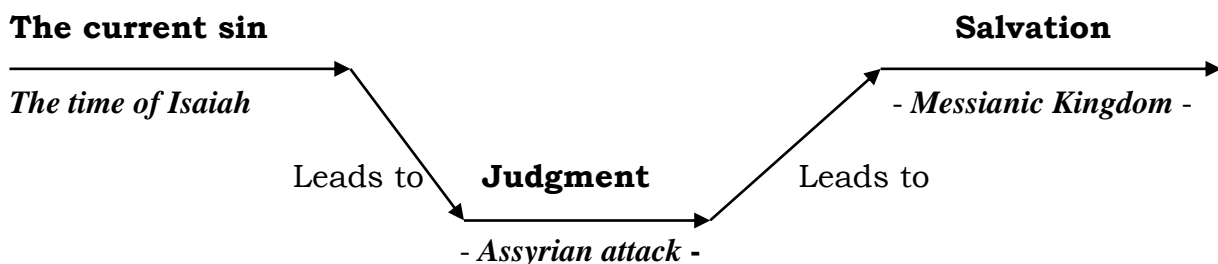
**Vv. 9-10:** A problem: Some say that hardness of heart mentioned here is the **consequence** of the sermon while others believe that the hardening of hearts was the intended purpose of the sermon. We, however, believe that both viewpoints are not exclusive. A person who consciously remains in a state of rejection towards the Word of God is in danger of God deliberately hardening his heart. This, e.g., happened to the Pharaoh in Exodus: Six times Pharaoh was stubborn (or hardened his heart), and then God himself hardened him. When someone consciously and wilfully rejects the truth, God may hand him over into error all the more: cf. Rom 1:24-31; 2Th 2:9-12. This passage in Isaiah is quoted in Mat 13:14-15; Joh 12:39-41 and Act 28:25-27.

**Vv. 11-12:** How long will this judgment last? Until the land has been desolated and the people have been brought into (Babylonian) captivity.

**V. 13:** But a remnant will survive: ➔ *“a holy offspring”*: The Book of Isaiah often speaks about a “remnant” (cf. Rom 11:1-5).

## **b.) Prophecies concerning the Messiah: The impending judgment of Israel and the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 7–12**

The following sketch illustrates the topic of chapters 7–12:



This passage addresses the near future (from the perspective of King Ahaz) as well as a distant future. The Assyrians would not only destroy Israel, but attack Judah as well (cf. Isa 8:8; 2Ki 18:13).

### **(1) The prophecy concerning Immanuel: chap. 7**

**Vv. 1-13:** About 735 BC, Syria and Israel (the Northern Kingdom) were allies, attempting to fend off attacks from Assyria. When Judah refused to join this alliance, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) attacked the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Following this attack, the King of Judah (Ahaz) sought the assistance of King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria though he was an enemy of Judah (for historical context see 2Ki 16 and 2Ch 28). Isaiah proclaimed the Word of God to Ahaz: Assyria will conquer both Syria and Israel (7:16) and also attack Judah (8:8). The prophecy in 7:8 was fulfilled by King Esarhaddon of Assyria (681-668 BC). Israel’s survivors (i.e. the remnant from the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom) were scattered into various regions. When Ahaz (a non-believer!) refused to ask God for a sign, God himself gave the house of David a sign: see Isa 7:14: **Immanuel!**

**Vv. 14-15:** ➔ *“Immanuel”* = *“God with us”*. Mat 1:23 confirms (quoting Isa 7:14) that this sign refers to Jesus. Other passages where the term *“almah”* (= *girl*) is used confirm that it refers to a

virgin: Gen 24:43; Exo 2:8; Psa 68:26; Pro 30:19; Sol 1:3 and above all the usage of the Greek word “*parthenos*” (παρθένος) in Mat 1:23. Here are some indications that this sign was not fulfilled during the time of Isaiah:

- 5 • The son of Isaiah who was to be born would be called *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* (not Immanuel, cf. Isa 8:1).
- Some interpreters (especially critical theologians) maintain that Hezekiah fulfilled this prophecy, but he was already born at the time: cf. 2Ki 16:2 and 18:2, making it clear that it does not refer to his birth.
- 10 • The virgin birth announced here is a miracle (*a sign*).

Can this prophecy really be understood without believing in a prophecy fulfilment during the time of Isaiah? We believe it can, and these are the reasons why:

- 15 • Besides the birth of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, we know of no other birth that would qualify as a virgin birth.
- The correlation clearly points to the Messiah (cf. Isa 8:8.10 and 9:5-6).
- The example from Isa 9:5-6 or 61:1-2 (cf. Luk 4:18-19; Jesus only mentions the day of salvation when quoting Isa 61:1-2 and not the judgment) shows that Isaiah does not always clearly
- 20 differentiate between eras, but often predicted events that were fulfilled in later times (or still await fulfilment).
- The child mentioned in verse 16 could also refer to “*Shear-Jashub*”.

In this context, Kröker says:

- 25 It is part of the secret of the prophetic word that it usually corresponds to a very specific time and circumstance and firstly finds its fulfilment there. Yet, this fulfilment is not the ultimate fulfilment. Prophetically that, which is to be fulfilled, points beyond its initial fulfilment to an ultimate, complete fulfilment.<sup>41</sup>

It must, however, be noted that verses 15-17 also necessitate an imminent fulfilment. Unger says:

- 30 **A non-Messianic sign as an annex, 16.** It is the sign given to Ahaz in the form of the son of Isaiah, Shear-Jashub. *Before* this boy Shear-Jashub (7, 3) would be three or four years older, “the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste”. This prophecy was fulfilled when Tiglath-Pileser conquered Damascus in 732 BC and killed Rezin (2Ki 16:9). Pekah was murdered only two years after this astonishing
- 35 prediction.<sup>42</sup>

**Vv. 17-25:** V. 17 shows the extent of the judgment. In accordance with God’s will, the King of Assyria will be the tool that carries out God’s judgment. He was the man whom Ahaz trusted more than God. How ironic! The *Bible Annotée* summarises verses 14-25 accurately:

- 40 You do not want the sign that God has given: Therefore God himself will provide a sign of salvation (v. 14), but it will be a salvation that does not prevent the demise of the people: Current enemies will certainly be defeated soon (v. 15-16), but the

<sup>41</sup> Jakob Kröker, *Jesaja I, Jesaja 1–39: Immanuel und die Völker* in *Das Lebendige Wort*, Volume 5, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, revised and supplemented by Hans Brandenburg (Giessen: Brunnen Publishing House, 1982), p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Merrill F. Unger, “*Die Propheten*”, Volume 3, in *Bibel Aktuell*, translated from American English (Wetzlar: Hermann Schulte, 1970), p. 25.

Assyrians, who will save you from them, will be the executors of my judgment on account of your disbelief (v. 17-25).<sup>43</sup>

According to the Bible Annotée, passages 8:8.10 and 9:1-6 (this passage forms a whole with chap. 8) clearly advocate the messiahship of verse 7:14!<sup>44</sup>

- In chap. 7:14: He will be born.
- In chap. 9:5-6: He is born.
- In chap. 11:1ff: He reigns.

The introduction above explains the purpose for the Book of Isaiah. The unfaithful kings of Israel will be replaced by the divine King Immanuel. These short Messianic references seem enigmatic until we recognise the author's ingenious purpose. Chapter 7 talks about the conflict between Ahaz, the King of Judah as well as about the Northern Kingdom and its ally, the King of Syria (Rezin). God encourages Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah to fully trust him in this conflict. Yet, Ahaz does not believe. And in the middle of this discourse (or story), Isaiah inserts the announcement of Immanuel's virgin birth. Chapter 8 is the same: In the middle of announcing the attack by Assyria, Isaiah inserts another promise about the coming Messiah in verse 14 (cf. v. 10). The impending judgment through Assyria (chap. 8–10) is a contrast to the announcement of the Messiah's coming in 9:1-5 and 11:1ff. The Messiah will ultimately accomplish what the faithless kings of Jerusalem and Samaria could not achieve: Peace!

## (2) The sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz: chap. 8

Uriah and Zechariah (v. 2) are witnesses to the judgment of Syria and Israel, a judgment that Isaiah had announced by giving his second child the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. This name means "*speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder*". God wanted to destroy both kingdoms because the Northern Kingdom trusted in Syria and the Southern Kingdom relied on Assyria. Neither (political) alliances nor divination, but only trust in God, can save us. The Lord is "*a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall*" (v. 14) to those who do not believe. For Messianic clues in this chapter, see verses 10 and 14 (Immanuel will become a stumbling block to those who do not put their hope in him but instead trust in other powers [here Assyria]).

## (3) Prophecy about the birth and rule of the Messiah: chap. 9:1-7

In some Bible translations, this passage is given in verses 8:23 to 9:6 (e.g. Luther Bible). The land occupied by the Assyrians (i.e. Northern Israel) will one day be the area where the Messiah resides. Zebulun and Naphtali: This is the region of Galilee where Jesus walked as a man! 9:1 is quoted in Mat 4:15-16. This passage is a prophecy announcing the (first) coming of Christ. The Son of God is the Messiah, Immanuel as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah!

**V. 5: "Midian":** cf. Jug 7.

**V. 6: ➔ "For to us a child is born":** This indicates the humanness (incarnation) of Jesus. **"To us a son is given":** This seems to refer to his divinity. The title ➔ **"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty**

<sup>43</sup> Frédéric Godet, 'Ésaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations', AT 7 in *Bible Annotée*. Reprint (St-Légier: P.E.R.L.E., 1985), p. 73. We have translated the French text into English.

<sup>44</sup> For an in-depth study on the interpretation of this prophetic passage, we recommend the Bible Annotée, op. cit., pp. 73-76.

**God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**” reveals his nature, his character. A person who does not trust in God lives in darkness (8:21-22) while the Messiah, the divine child, brings light (9:1-6).

#### **(4) Prophecy against Israel (Samaria): chap. 9:8 to 10:4**

The refrain → **“Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away”** (repeated 4 times in 9:12.17.21 and 10:4; for the first time in 5:25) refers to judgment, which will come for the following reasons:

- Pride, arrogance: 9:10-11
- They led people astray: 9:16
- Wickedness of all: 9:17
- Injustice and corruption: 10:1-2.

#### **(5) Prophecies against Assyria: God both uses and judges the enemy: chap. 10:5-34**

God uses Assyria as *“the rod of my anger”* (vv. 5-6) to judge Israel, but Assyria also acted in pride (vv. 8-14) so God will judge Assyria as well. God will use Babylon as a whip (v. 26) to defeat Assyria; and indeed, Babylon conquered Nineveh in 610 BC. Compare 10:10-11 with chapters 36 to 37!

**Vv. 20-22:** The conversion of → *“the remnant of Israel”* apparently still awaits fulfilment, which is indicated by the eschatological expression *“in that day”* (vv. 20.27) as well as by the overall context (cf. chap. 11–12) and the application of the text in Rom 9:27-28, but, as already mentioned above, a double fulfilment is also possible.

#### **(6) Prophecy about the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 11–12**

Both of these chapters are entirely Messianic and give us a lot of information about the future Messianic Kingdom. The Messiah will come from the family of Jesse, who was the father of David (v. 1; cf. Rom 15:12).

First, I would like to comment on the seven attributes of the Spirit of God in Isa 11:2: This passage can explain the *“7 spirits of God”* in Revelation (cf. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6): The number 7 symbolizes perfection. It is used in the same way in the Book of Revelation in regard to the Son of God where he is characterised in 5:6 as a lamb with 7 eyes (→ omniscience) and 7 horns (→ omnipotence) and in 5:12 with 7 attributes. God the Father also receives these attributes in Rev 7:11-12.

**The Messiah will be filled with the Holy Spirit (vv. 1-2) and his kingdom will have the following characteristics:**

- Righteousness and faithfulness: vv. 3-5.
- Peace within the animal world: vv. 6-8.
- Absence of wickedness in Jerusalem: v. 9.
- Even other (pagan) nations will turn to the Messiah: v. 10 (cf. Isa 66:20; Zec 14:16ff).
- The rest of the Jews scattered across the nations will return to Israel: vv. 11-12 (cf. Isa 27:12-13; Eze 39:27-28 and many other passages).
- The Northern and Southern Kingdom (Ephraim and Judah) will again be united: v. 13 (cf. Eze 37:15-22).

- Other nations will be subject to Israel: v. 14.
- Topographical changes will facilitate the return of Israel: vv. 15-16 (cf. Rev 16:12; Zec 14:4-10).
- In that day, Israel will sing songs of praise: chap. 12 (cf. Isa 26:1ff).

5 Isa 8:18 allows us to interpret chapters 7–12 according to the meaning of the names given to Isaiah's children:

- |    |                           |   |  |
|----|---------------------------|---|--|
|    | • Maher-Shalal-Khash-Baz: | ➔ | Judgment of Israel, Syria and Assyria is imminent. |
|    | • Shear-Jashub:           | ➔ | A remnant will return.                             |
| 10 | • Isaiah (Yeshayahu)      | ➔ | Yahweh is salvation (Yahweh will save).            |

Chapters 7–10 speak of judgment. Passage 10:20-21 mentions the return of those who escaped. 7:14; 9:5-6, and chap. 11–12 talk about salvation.

15 After announcing the judgment and the restoration of Israel in chapters 1–12, the prophet turns to the nations whom God will also judge (chap. 13–23). Interpreters generally refer to chapters 24–27 as “*Isaiah's Apocalypse*”; the prophet announces that, ultimately, the whole world will be judged, and a faithful remnant of his people will be saved.

## 2. Prophecies of judgment about the nations: chap. 13–23

20 A summary of topics discussed in these chapters:

- The passages deal with nations that are hostile toward Israel.
  - The promise, which God made to Abraham, will be fulfilled: cf. Gen 12:3.
  - The prophecy is fulfilled or will be fulfilled in four different eras:
- 25
1. The Assyrian exile in 722 BC: chap. 15; 18; 20; 22.
  2. The Babylonian exile in 605 BC: chap. 23.
  3. The fall of Babylon: the Medes defeated Babylon in 539 BC: chap. 13–14 (see esp. 13:17).
  4. The coming “*Great Tribulation*”: chap. 19; compare also several other individual statements as e.g. in 13:4-13; 22:5 etc.

30 **a.) Against Babylon, Assyria and the Philistines: chap. 13–14**

### (1) Against the Babylonians: chap. 13–14:23

35 The prophecy in verse 13:17 announces the imminent fall of Babylon, to be conquered by the Medo-Persian King Cyrus in 539 BC. Yet, the following expressions indicate that the passage also refers to an eschatological event: “*the day of the LORD*” (v. 6), “*destruction from the Almighty*” (v. 6) and “*in the day of his burning anger*” (v. 13). This interpretation is substantiated by the following: (1) The judgments affect the entire universe (cf. 13:10-13), and (2) parallel texts in the Revelation of John also substantiate this (cf. Isa 13:9-13 with Rev 6–16). 13:18: „...*they will have no mercy on infants nor will they look with compassion on children*“: Compare this with the revenge Psalm 137:8-9: „*O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us – he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks!*“

40

The question is often asked whether (the whore of) Babylon is a restored Babylonian Kingdom (modern day Iraq and its surrounding countries) or whether it will be a kingdom that merely has the character of the Babylonian Kingdom from antiquity. Perhaps the end time Babylon will be the

restored Roman Empire that will rise again. At this point we would like to reference our brochure about the Book of Daniel and the commentary on chap. 2 and 7. A side note: In his first letter, the apostle Peter refers to Babylon as Rome (5:13). He might have used this term as a precautionary measure (danger of persecution) and as a code word. We do not believe that the old Babylonian Kingdom will be restored as it once was (cf. Isa 13:19-22); we believe that the term Babylon refers to a different kind of kingdom, one that has the same character as ancient Babylon (brutality: see the description of the fourth animal [= kingdom] in Dan 7, which will precede the Messianic Kingdom). In 13:11 it says: *“I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins”*: In fact, the whole world is in focus, because for “earth” is not the word “aerats” used here (which can also be translated as “land”), but “thebel”, which also means “globe”.

A few distinctive features in chapter 14:

(a) *Other nations will facilitate Israel's return to its land: 14:1-3*

This passage is very specific. Many passages in the Book of Isaiah (e.g. 11:11ff; 27:12-13; 35:9) and in other books of the Old Testament (e.g.: Eze 37; Hos 14:4-7; Amo 9:11-15; Zec 10:6-12) announce the re-establishment of Israel, i.e. the return of the Jewish people to their homeland during the end times. This passage also specifically states that the (pagan) nations will help Israel return to its Promised Land (cf. Isa 49:22; 60:9; 66:18-23).

(b) *Who is the king in chap. 14:4-17 (cf. Eze 28:12-19)?*

Does Isa 14 only refer to a Babylonian king and Eze 28 only to the King of Tyre?

- Perhaps a historical Babylonian king? E.g. Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus or Belshazzar?
- Perhaps an eschatological ruler, as e.g. in Rev 13 (the beast with the 10 horns and 7 heads = the Antichrist) and in Dan 7:23-25 (the little horn = the Antichrist)?
- Perhaps Satan who was ultimately the source of Babylon's power (cf. Joh 12:31; Rev 12:8-9; Luk 10:18; 2Th 2:9)? Some statements as e.g. in 14:12-14 seem to indicate supernatural capabilities. This applies even more so to Eze 28:11ff. Once again, we need to remind ourselves that a prophecy can speak about two persons (or events) simultaneously. Here an example: 2Sa 7:14 initially talks about Solomon, but this prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ (Son of David)!

Some interpreters believe that this passage refers to the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:1-18; 2Th 2:3-4.8; the small horn in Dan 7:8; 9:27; or the king in Dan 11:36-45). According to this interpretation, the Antichrist would be in hell (cf. Rev 19:20; 20:10). Unger is convinced that it is a comparison between the fall of the Antichrist and the fall of Satan at the beginning (of creation). Perhaps both interpretations are valid.

The mentioning of “heavens”, the “mount of God”, the word “cherub” (an angel) and the statement “*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created*” in Isa 14 and Eze 28 seem to refer to Satan. Indeed, before Satan fell, he was in heaven and he is an angel.

Even the early church saw these two prophetic texts as an allusion to the origin and fall of Satan. When reading the passages **Isa 14:9-14** and **Eze 28:11-19**, one has to admit that not all of the texts' descriptions and statements are applicable to the kings of Babylon and Tyre. Is it possible that it was God's intention to reveal certain truths about Satan in these passages? If true (and we believe it is), these passages give us a prophetic glimpse into the earliest beginnings:<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The following analysis of the passages in Isa 14 and Eze 28 can also be found in our brochure “*Angelology*”.

- Satan is a creature of God (**Eze 28:13.15**).
- He occupied a special position (**Eze 28:12-13**). Perhaps he was the fourth after the trinity?
- He had a throne in heaven (**Isa 14:13**).
- 5 • He is called “*morning star*”, “*son of the dawn*” (**Isa 14:12**). The Vulgate (Latin translation of the O.T.) translates this term as “*Lucifer*” (= *bearer of light*).

This name indicates how wonderful (**Isa 28:13**) and mighty (**Eze 28:14**) this princely angel was... “... *till wickedness was found in you*” (**Eze 28:15**). And what was his sin?

10

His pride led to his downfall. **Satan was filled with violence and sin (Eze 28:16-17)** – and he also introduced humankind to sin (by tempting Eve, cf. Gen 3). What was the Devil’s, Lucifer’s sin? Perhaps **Isa 14:13-14** can provide us with an answer to this question:

15

- *I will ascend to the heavens...*
- *I will raise my throne above the stars of God.*
- *I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly.*
- *I will ascend above the tops of the clouds...*
- *I will make myself like the Most High.*

20

In Hebrew, the verbs are in the cohortative, i.e. the verbs are used in the first-person singular: “*I want to ascend...*” or “*Let me ascend...*” etc.

**Eze 28:16-18** summarises it as follows:

25

- *Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence...*
- *Your heart became proud on account of your beauty...*
- *You have desecrated your sanctuaries.*

30

God spoke the first word of judgment against Satan (others would follow, see for example **Joh 12:31**; cf. **2Pe 2:4**):

*You sinned... and I expelled you...* (**Eze 28:16**).

35

*How you have fallen from heaven, morning star!* (**Isa 14:12**)

## **(2) Against Assyria: chap. 14:24-27**

At first, this passage focuses on the judgment of Assyria; yet verse 26 could also indicate a prophetic judgment of all nations at the end of time. Compare with Isa 36–37.

## **(3) Against the Philistines: chap. 14:28-32**

40

**V. 29:** The “root of that snake” refers to the godless King Ahaz. The viper that comes forth from the snake and becomes a dragon is Hezekiah who will defeat the Philistines (cf. **2Ki 18:8ff**).

**Vv. 31-32:** The Philistines will be completely conquered and destroyed by the Assyrians, a prophecy that was fulfilled through Sennacherib.

## **b.) Against Moab: chap. 15–16**

Moab will be destroyed by the Assyrians because of its pride. 16:3-4: Judah is supposed to take in refugees from Moab. This seems to be echoed in Jesus' words when he said that we should not take revenge but repay evil with good (Mat 5:38ff; cf. the warning of the apostle Paul in Rom 12:19-21).  
 5 16:5 is another "Messianic flash"! The divine judge, the Messiah, is characterised by grace and righteousness, in contrast to the wickedness and injustice of the enemy of God's people. 16:13-14: This was supposed to happen "within three years" (cf. 21:16: Kedar, in Arabia [today Saudi Arabia] was to be judged "within one year"!)

## **c.) Against Damascus and Samaria: chap. 17**

10 **V. 1:** Against Damascus.

**V. 3:** Against Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom of Israel with Samaria as its capital city).

15 Judgment will descend on Israel and Syria because the Northern Kingdom of Israel made an alliance with Syria (cf. Isa 7:2). Vv. 6-7: Only a remnant will survive in Israel (Samaria) and believe in Yahweh, their Creator, the Holy One of Israel. We have already mentioned in the introduction that the name of God "*the Holy One*" is typical for Isaiah. Some statements in this text probably also refer to the end times: vv. 4.7.9.<sup>46</sup> Damascus (i.e. Aram: in 732 BC) and Samaria (Northern Kingdom: in 722 BC) will be conquered by the Assyrians (cf. Isa 8:4). The verses 12-14  
 20 once again address the judgment of Assyria. It is true that Assyria will serve as God's tool to execute his judgment over Israel and Syria, but Assyria will also be judged (because of its pride and brutality) (cf. Isa 10:5ff; the death of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in front of the gates of Jerusalem in Isa 37:36-37 was perhaps the fulfilment of this prophecy).

## **d.) Against Ethiopia (Cush): chap. 18**

25 The Ethiopians (Cushites) ruled over Egypt (the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty) from 714 to 633 BC (approximately). Interpreters disagree about the judgment announced in verses 3-6. Some think it refers to Assyria's attack. It is, however, clear that Ethiopia will fear the Lord in the future.

## **e.) Against Egypt: chap. 19–20**

30 This prophecy has perhaps already been partially fulfilled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century under the Egyptian ruler Ptolemais Philometor, but still awaits its main fulfilment.

### **Chapter 19:**

35 **Vv. 2-4:** Civil war and internal problems in the land: These conditions emerged at least partially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Yet, the situation in Egypt at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century bears an astonishing resemblance to the situation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC: Terrorism prevails; a religious war is brooding, and a civil war could erupt at any time between moderates and extremists (like in Libya, Iraq, Syria and Yemen at present). In Algeria, this has already been the case for some time.

40 **Vv. 5-7:** Natural catastrophes.

**Vv. 8-10:** Economic crisis.

<sup>46</sup> This is also the opinion of John A. Martin, op cit, p. 1064.



**Vv. 11-15:** Chaotic internal politics. This is very true of present times.

**Vv. 16-17:** Egypt will be afraid of Judah (which is the case today).

5 **V. 18:** Hebrew will even be spoken in some cities there!

**Vv. 19-21:** People will pray to Yahweh (and not Allah)!

10 **Vv. 22-25:** Yahweh will restore Egypt; and together with Israel and Assyria it will serve the Lord (Yahweh). This will be the end of the conflict in the Middle East!

15 **Chapter 20:** Egypt and Ethiopia will be conquered by the Assyrians in the near future (from Isaiah's perspective), which occurred under the Assyrian King Esarhaddon between 680 and 660 BC (cf. v. 4).

**Vv. 5-6:** This means that Judah, which had relied on military help from Egypt and Ethiopia, will be brought to shame (the false covenant is again denounced in chapters 30 and 31)!

## **f.) Against Babylon, Edom and Arabia: chap. 21**

### **(1) Against Babylon: vv. 1-10**

20 Here the prophet announces the destruction of Babylon through Elam and the Medes (v. 2). Thus, Isaiah proclaims the future victory of Cyrus over the Babylonians in 539 BC. His prophecy was fulfilled about 150 years later (cf. v. 9 with Rev 14:8; 18:2 and Dan 5).

### **(2) Against Edom: vv. 11-12**

25 Seir: This is Edom: cf. Gen 32:3; Num 24:18; Jug 5:4. No precise information is given on who will be the executor of the judgment; the passage merely states that the Edomites will be judged. Indeed, Edom was also conquered by the Assyrians, just as all other peoples in that region with the exception of Jerusalem (cf. Isa 36–37)!

### **(3) Against Arabia: vv. 13-17**

30 Dedan and Kedar are Arabian tribes. They will be destroyed in three years, probably by the Assyrians since Sargon II allegedly wrote in 715 BC that he had conquered several Arabian tribes.

## **g.) Against Jerusalem: chap. 22**

God uses the Assyrians to punish Jerusalem for its unfaithfulness toward the Lord (cf. vv. 12-14). The people did not seem to be worried, quite the opposite in fact:

35 **V. 13:** ➔ With hardened hearts people say, *“Let us eat and drink... for tomorrow we die”*. Paul quotes this famous saying in 1Co 15:32.<sup>47</sup> The references to Shebna (who was the governor in the royal palace in Jerusalem) and Eliakim (v. 20) clarify that this passage addresses an imminent attack by Sennacherib. Shebna had most likely opposed the words of Isaiah, and through divine inspiration

<sup>47</sup> Paraphrased: If there is no resurrection, one could simply enjoy life by any means since one will die anyway!

Isaiah proclaimed that Shebna would not be laid to rest in the grave he had prepared for himself (cf. the hollowed grave of Joseph of Arimathea in Mat 27:57-61), but on foreign soil, presumably in exile to Assyria.

- 5 **V. 20: → *Eliakim*:** cf. Isa 36:3 and 2Ki 18:18. In contrast to Shebna, Eliakim remained faithful to the Lord. God therefore also gave him special responsibilities. Carrying the key to the royal palace is a symbol of responsibility and power. Eliakim would be like a peg. Yet, in v. 25 it says that *in that day* this peg will give way. This is perhaps an allusion to the future exile of the people.
- 10 **V. 22: → “*The key to the house of David*”:** Ultimately the prophecy will be fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the Son of David. In Rev 3:7, it says that Jesus holds the key of David.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, Eliakim can be seen as a type of Christ. Verse 22 is clearly Messianic. Referring back to the introduction and to our analysis of the purpose for the Book of Isaiah, we want to emphasise that the prophetic interpolation, this Messianic flash in the middle of the proclamation of judgment over
- 15 Jerusalem, can be explained quite logically: The day will come when the royal governance of the Kingdom of Judah will be disposed of and replaced by the rule of a Neo-David, i.e. by Christ, the Son of David. Chapter 7 contrasts the godless King Ahaz with the divine child Immanuel, who is to be born. Why does Isaiah mention Shebna in this text, the governor of the palace, as a contrast to the Neo-David, but not Hezekiah, the King of Judah? He probably did this because Hezekiah
- 20 remained faithful to God. A large part of the people, on the other hand, was faithless. And Manasseh, Hezekiah’s son, was the worst king Judah ever had.

## h.) Against Tyre and Sidon: chap. 23

- 25 Kröker notes that the Phoenicians were very experienced tradespeople (as the Lebanese still are today). They crossed the world’s oceans on ship with great skill and a tremendous entrepreneurial spirit. They also built a large fleet of trade ships and constructed numerous trade cities with colonies along the shores. According to Amo 1:9, they sold their prisoners as slaves to other peoples. Compare with Eze 28! Yet the main reason for judgment was... their pride (cf. vv. 8-12). For a long time, Nebuchadnezzar was unable to conquer the city (fortress) although he had besieged it for 12 years until about 585 BC. Ultimately, it was Alexander the Great who completely destroyed the city
- 30 in 332 BC (cf. Eze 26:14 and Zec 9:2-4)!

- V. 15: → The 70 years:** The *Bible Annotée* places these years parallel to the duration of Babylonian rule since Nebuchadnezzar from approx. 606 to 538 BC. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar subjected Judah as well as all other peoples of the region. His dominance ended when the Medo-Persians destroyed Babylon.
- 35

## 3. Isaiah’s Apocalypse: Prophecies concerning the judgment of the world, the resurrection and the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 24–27

- 40 **a.) The positioning of Isaiah’s Apocalypse within the first part of the Book of Isaiah**

These four chapters are often referred to as “*Isaiah’s Apocalypse*”.

<sup>48</sup> Compare with Mat 16:19 where Jesus tells Peter that he will give him the key to Hades (in the context of the Church).

Many exegetes (conservative as well as critical) point out that Isaiah's Apocalypse (chapters 24–27) and the preceding chapters 13–23 (oracles against the nations) are closely related. Isaiah's Apocalypse is positioned among the prophecies concerning Israel and the nations that confronted Israel during that era. In chapters 1–12, the prophet shows that judgment awaits Jerusalem and Judah because of their sin. Yahweh will use Assyria as a punishing rod to carry out his judgments. However, a remnant will be saved, and Jerusalem will be restored. In chapters 13–23, the prophet announces the judgment of individual nations, which includes the judgment of Jerusalem (chapter 22). In chapters 28–39, individual nations are addressed again including Judah and Jerusalem. Chapters 1–12 state that King Ahaz is in conflict with Assyria. King Hezekiah is mentioned in the last chapters (chap. 28–39, explicitly in chapters 36–39). Isaiah's Apocalypse – in which the prophet concurrently announces the judgment of the entire world and the end-time restoration of a remnant from Israel and the nations – is at the heart<sup>49</sup> of the judgments concerning Jerusalem, Judah and other nations.

## **b.) The structure testifies to the cohesiveness and authenticity of Isaiah's Apocalypse**

We are convinced that these four chapters consist of four parts; the structure and style of each part is a continuous alternation between oracles on the one hand, and songs, praise or prayer on the other.<sup>50</sup>

### **1<sup>st</sup> part:**

- 24:1-6: Oracle (judgment of the world with a remnant)
- 24:7-12: Song for the city (mourning song of the godless)
- 24:13: Oracle (the remnant)
- 24:14-16a: Song of jubilation (joy of the saved)
- 24:16b-20: Oracle (end of the world)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> part:**

- 24:21-23: Oracle (Yahweh reigns on Zion)
- 25:1-5: Song for the city (gratitude for the fall of the city)
- 25:6-8: Oracle (salvation on Zion)
- 25:9-10a: Jubilation on Zion
- 25:10b-12: Oracle (Moab is toppled)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> part:**

- 26:1-6: Song for the city (joy on Zion – the city is toppled): Enter!
- 26:7-19 Prayer (parenthesis)
- 26:20-21 Paraenesis (judgment and salvation): Enter!

### **4<sup>th</sup> part:**

<sup>49</sup> Cf. with Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); he refers to Isaiah's Apocalypse as the "innermost core" (p. 120) and an axis in the section from chapters 13–39.

<sup>50</sup> Compare all structures proposed in our commentary on chapters 24–27 with our dissertation *Restauratio und Resurrectio in der Jesaja-Apokalypse*, defended in 2001 at the *Evangelische Theologische Fakultät*, Leuven (Belgium), published in 2008 under the title *Endzeitliche Wiederherstellung Israels und Auferstehung in der Jesaja-Apokalypse* by the Diplomica publishing house in Hamburg. For structures, refer to chapter 2 (exegetical commentary) pages 75ff.

- 27:1: Oracle (Yahweh conquers the monster of the sea)  
 27:2-6: Vineyard song (restoration of Israel)  
 27:7-11: Israel punished – the city is desolated  
 27:12-13: Two oracles (gathering and return of Israel)

5

A continuous alternation between the hostile city toppled by God and the restored city of Jerusalem can be observed throughout the entire Apocalypse of Isaiah. The former is called a “ruined city” (24:10), “city” (25:2), [city with] “fortified walls” (25:12), “lofty city” (26:5) or “fortified city” (27:10); the latter is called “Jerusalem” (24:23; 27:13), “Mount Zion” (24:23), “this mountain” (25:6-10a), “strong city” (26:1), “vineyard” (27:2) or “holy mountain” (27:13). The alternation creates a consistent upwards and downwards movement: The people in the lofty city are thrown to the ground (5 passages: 24:10; 25:2; 25:12; 26:5-6; 27:10), into the dust (cf. 25:12; 26:5) while the other people of the earth (26:21), who dwell in the dust (26:19), are raised up to Mount Zion (5 passages: 24:23; 25:6-10a; 26:1-2; 27:2; 27:13):

15

	24:23	25:6-10a	26:1-2	27:2	27:13
24:10-12	25:2	25:10b-12	26:5-6	27:10-11	

Five passages refer to the city of the *wicked* and five to the city of the *righteous*. Isaiah’s Apocalypse consists of concentrically structured parts, which (when taken together) proclaim a clear message: *The proud will be humbled while those who were humiliated by the proud will be raised up by Yahweh on that day, so they can rejoice in his presence on Mount Zion.* Isaiah’s Apocalypse begins with judgments that also concern the ruined city (24:10) and ends with the return of the people of Yahweh to the holy mountain in Jerusalem (27:13). The entire Apocalypse of Isaiah is structured contrastively as well as concentrically: the *city of the wicked* and *Yahweh’s city with his righteous people* are consistently contrasted with each other:

- A ***Ruined city, which cannot be entered anymore*** (24:10-12) *versus*  
 B ***Mount Zion*** (24:23) *versus*  
 C ***Ruined city*** (25:2) *versus*  
 D ***This mountain*** (25:6-10a) *versus*  
 E ***High fortified walls of Moab*** (25:10b-12) *versus*  
 E<sup>1</sup> ***Strong city in the land of Judah*** (26:1-2) *versus*  
 D<sup>1</sup> ***Lofty city levelled to the ground*** (26:5-6) *versus*  
 C<sup>1</sup> ***Vineyard*** (27:2-6) *versus*  
 B<sup>1</sup> ***Fortified city stands desolated*** (27:10-11) *versus*  
 A<sup>1</sup> ***Holy mountain in Jerusalem to which the children of Israel return*** (27: 13) *versus* End

At the centre of this structure, the “*high fortified walls*” of **Moab** are contrasted with the “*strong city in the land of Judah*”.

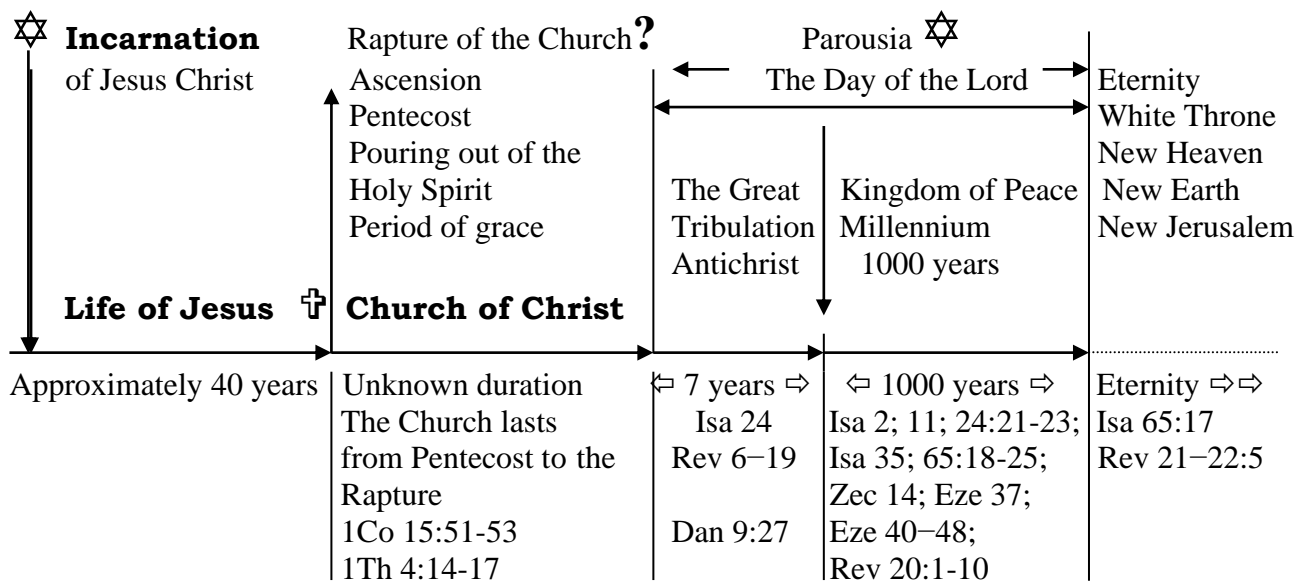
These are the four concentric parts of Isaiah’s Apocalypse:

	(1) 24:1-20	(2) 24:21–25:12	(3) 26:1-21	(4) 27:1-13
45	A Vv 1-6	A Vv 21-23	A Vv 1-6	A V. 1
	B Vv 7-12	B Vv 1-5	B Vv 7-10	B Vv 2-6
	C V. 13	C Vv 6-8	C Vv 11-15	C Vv 7-11
	B <sup>1</sup> Vv 14-16a	B <sup>1</sup> Vv 9-10a	B <sup>1</sup> Vv 16-19	B <sup>1</sup> V. 12
50	A <sup>1</sup> Vv 16b-20	A <sup>1</sup> Vv 10b-12	A <sup>1</sup> Vv 20-21	A <sup>1</sup> V. 13

The central parts (C) by themselves contain the following message: (1) Yahweh will judge the world but a remnant will survive (future: 24:13). (2) This remnant will participate in the feast on Mount Zion (future: 25:6-8). (3) You, Yahweh, will achieve this (in the present with a trusting and prayerful view of the future: 26:11-15). (4) However, Israel must first repent and the hostile city ruined (as a condition for future restoration: 27:7-11). The concentric structure as well as the consistent alternating pattern (between the hostile city and the city of the people of God) falls apart as soon as one part is isolated as an assumed (subsequent) addition. Numerous commentators and exegetes have claimed (and still claim) that these four chapters are the result of a so-called growth process (according to e.g. Rudolph, Wildberger, Vermeylen); they also claim that the text consists of individual patchwork passages (fragmentation hypothesis; e.g. Cheyne), which were written by different authors and then consolidated by an unknown (anonymous) author. All these critical hypotheses seem extremely dubious in light of the demonstrated artful structure of the text. In our view, cutting out certain verses or only parts of certain verses is problematic and even inappropriate in light of the particular structure of the individual parts (A, B, C).

### c.) An eschatological pattern for clarification purposes

These four chapters reveal that the world is approaching judgment. The resurrection of those who belong to Yahweh (26:19) and the Messianic Kingdom (24:23; 25:6-8; 26:1-4; 27:2-13) follow the judgment.



### d.) Commentary on the four parts of Isaiah's Apocalypse

We will initially present a pattern for each part that elucidates the concentric textual structure, followed by a commentary on the content.

#### (1) The first part: the judgment of the world: 24:1-20

This part is structured as follows:

- |                                 |   |          |
|---------------------------------|---|----------|
| <b>A</b> Judgment of the world: | <b>a</b> All classes are affected:          | Vv. 1-3  |
|                                 | <b>b</b> Reason: Violation of the covenant: | Vv. 4-6  |
| <b>B</b> The ruined city:       | Song of lamentation:                        | Vv. 7-12 |

C Harvest of olives:

A remnant survives:

V. 13

B<sup>1</sup> Those who escaped:

Jubilation:

Vv. 14-16a

A<sup>1</sup> Judgment of the whole world:a<sup>1</sup> Nobody escapes:

Vv. 16b-18

b<sup>1</sup> Reason: sin:

Vv. 19-20

(a) *Yahweh judges the entire earth: Vv. 1-6*

(i) The judgment affects everyone: Vv. 1-3

The concentric structure elucidates the following:

A a Yahweh lays waste to the earth and devastates it (v. 1a)

b He ruins its face and scatters its inhabitants (v. 1b)

B All classes are affected (v. 2)

A<sup>1</sup> a<sup>1</sup> The earth will be completely laid to waste and plundered (v. 3a)b<sup>1</sup> Yahweh has spoken the word and decided it (v. 3b).

Some commentators believe that “ereš” (עֶרֶשׁ: *land* or *earth*) in verses 1 and 3 should be translated as “land” and not as “earth”, which would mean that the judgment announced here would only affect Israel and Judah. These are the reasons why we, together with the majority of exegetes, believe that the word “ereš” must be translated as “earth” or “world”:

- Parallel occurrences of the Hebrew word “ereš” (עֶרֶשׁ: = *earth*) and “thebel” (תֵּבֵל: = *world*) in verses 1 and 4 refer to the whole earth.
- The expression “everlasting covenant” in verse 5 and the motif of the Flood in the respective passage A<sup>1</sup> (vv. 16b-20) in the whole concentric structure suggest that the author is referring to the whole earth.

(ii) The violation of the everlasting covenant is the reason for the judgment: Vv. 4-6

The following concentric structure elucidates this:

A The entire world is devastated (v. 4)

a The world mourns, withers and languishes

b The exalted of the earth languish

B Because the earth’s inhabitants have violated the everlasting covenant (v. 5)

a The earth is being defiled by its inhabitants

b because they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes

c They have broken the everlasting covenant

A<sup>1</sup> Therefore a curse ravishes the earth (v. 6)a<sup>1</sup> A curse consumes the earth, and its people must bear the guiltb<sup>1</sup> The earth’s inhabitants are burned up, only a few survive.

The judgment spares no class (not even the priests). It is, however, important to note that the prophet declares in v. 6 that a small number of people will survive the judgment described in these verses. Verse 13 states precisely the same thing. However, verses 16b-20 indicate that nobody will escape, and the whole world will perish. We will address this apparent contradiction later on.

5           (b)       *The ruined and hostile city: Vv. 7-12*

This part is **structured** as follows:

A The new wine dries up; the vine withers (7a)

10       B a Everyone who was joyful now groans – the joyful tambourines have ceased (7b-8a)

      b The revellers make no more noise – the joyful harp is silent (8b-c)

      c The people no longer drink wine with a song – the beer is bitter to its drinkers (v. 9)

      C The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred; no one can enter (v. 10)

15

      B<sup>1</sup> c<sup>1</sup> People complain in the streets that there is no more wine (11a)

          b<sup>1</sup> All joy turns to gloom (11b)

          a<sup>1</sup> All joyful sounds are banished from the earth (11c)

20       A<sup>1</sup> The city is left in ruins, and the gate is battered to pieces (v. 12)

Five times the text refers to the city hostile to the people of God. In an attempt to identify the city, exegetes have made several suggestions. However, some suggestions were influenced by prejudices concerning the composition date. The following is a list of suggested cities:

25

      1. Nineveh

      2. Jerusalem

      3. Babylon

      4. Susa

30       5. A Moabite city

      6. Tyre

      7. Sidon

      8. Carthage

      9. Samaria

35       10. Rome

      11. Various cities in the five passages

      12. A symbolic city as the city hostile towards the people of God

40       In our view, the overall context seems to favour the interpretation that the hostile city is a global and symbolic city opposing Israel. Chapters 13–23 speak of various nations hostile to the faithful people while, in chapters 24–27, i.e. in Isaiah's Apocalypse, the prophet is referring to all peoples who are opposed to the people of God.

      (c)       *The olive harvest – a remnant will survive: V. 13*

Godet summarises it well:

45       It seems that everything has been destroyed by the recent judgment (v. 1-12). However, this is not the case. The world capital has been destroyed, but a part of the

world's population is still alive; among these are the faithful Israelites and the chosen ones from the heathen nations who are scattered among the peoples.<sup>51</sup>

This verse (as well as verse 6) indicates that the judgment of the world is coming, and a part of the world's population will survive. Numerous other passages in the Book of Isaiah refer to a remnant from the people of Israel who will survive and be restored to their land.

(d) *The jubilation of those who escaped: Vv. 14-16a*

It is astonishing that the prophet suddenly begins to praise God in the middle of the declaration of judgments. However, this is typical for the prophet's concentric and contrastive style! The joy of those who escaped in these verses is contrasted with the mourning of the inhabitants of the ruined hostile city in verses 7-12!

24:14: Joy of those escaping due to **Yahweh's** majesty: jubilation *in the islands of the sea!*  
 24:15a: Therefore, give glory to **Yahweh** *in the east!*  
 24:15b: Exalt the name of **Yahweh, the God of Israel** *in the islands of the sea!*  
 24:16f: *From the ends of the earth* we hear singing: Glory to the **Righteous One!**

This passage is also structured in a conspicuous manner: four lines, each line refers **to God** and to a **geographical direction**.

(e) *The entire world is affected by the judgment: Vv. 16b-20*

This part is **structured** as follows:

**A** Woe to me: The treacherous betray: the reality of **sin** (all-pervasive): V. 16b

**B** There is **no escaping**: Vv. 17-18b

**C** The floodgates of the **heavens** are opened, and the foundations of the earth shaken: V. 18c

**B<sup>1</sup>** **The entire earth** is split asunder: Vv. 19-20a

**A<sup>1</sup>** The earth falls and does not rise again: because **sin** weighs heavily on it: V. 20b

In part **A** (vv. 1-6), it says that all classes of society on earth are affected by the judgment. "Pit" and "snare" are used as metaphors in counterpart **A<sup>1</sup>** to express that no one will escape.

And yet there is a significant difference between **part A** and **part A<sup>1</sup>**: In verse 6 (part **A**), it says that a small remnant of people will survive (see also **part C**, v. 13) while part **A<sup>1</sup>** states that no one escapes; the earth falls and never rises again. Many exegetes see this as a contradiction resulting from different authorships or they assume that certain parts have been subsequently added (especially verse 20).<sup>52</sup> However, an analysis of the concentric structure of the entire part 24:1-20 reveals that these hypotheses are unfounded.

<sup>51</sup> Frédéric Godet, *AT 7: Ésaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*. La Bible Annotée. Par une Société de Théologiens et de Pasteurs sous dir. Frédéric Godet. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, St-Légier, Suisse: P.E.R.L.E., bibliothèque de l'Institut Emmaüs, 1981 (1<sup>re</sup> éd.: La Bible Annotée par une Société de théologiens et de pasteurs, Ancien Testament, Les prophètes I. Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher; Neuchâtel: J. Sandoz; Genève: Desrois, n. d. [1881]), p. 136. We translated from French into English.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaja II: 13–39*. Die Neue Echter Bibel: Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1994), p. 145 and Otto Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament. Ed. by Günther Bornkamm and Gerhard von Rad, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959), p. 78. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja*. Göttinger



The tension or apparent contradiction is explained in the passage 24:21-23. We are convinced that the judgment described in 24:1-6 in which a small number of people survive refers to the Great Tribulation (cf. Rev 6–19) while 24:19-20 refers to the end of the world (cf. 2Pe 3:10-12; Rev 20:11-12).

## (2) The second part: Yahweh reigns on Zion: 24:21–25:12

This part is structured as follows:

**A** Enemies deposed – Yahweh reigns on Zion: 24:21-23

**B** Yahweh destroys the hostile city: 25:1-5

**C** Yahweh prepares a feast on Mount Zion: 25:6-8

**B<sup>1</sup>** The joy of the redeemed on Zion: 25:9-10a

**A<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh topples Moab; the high fortified walls are brought down: 25:10b-12

This piece alternates between oracles and jubilation songs, between the humiliation of enemies and the exaltation of Yahweh and his people on Zion.

24:21-23: **Eschatological oracle** Toppling of enemies – Yahweh reigns on Zion

25:1-5: **Song of gratitude** For the destruction of the city

25:6-8: **Eschatological oracle** Yahweh and the feast on Mount Zion

25:9-10a: **Song of jubilation** In that day on Mount Zion

25:10b-12: **Eschatological oracle** Toppling of the high fortified walls of Moab

(a) *The enemies are deposed – Yahweh reigns on Zion: 24:21-23*

This passage is structured as follows:

**A Yahweh the judge: V. 21**

a) In that day Yahweh will punish: V. 21a

b) The powers in the heaven above: V. 21b

c) and the kings on the earth below: V. 21c

**(The supreme ruler humbles those who are proud)**

**B Enemies are defeated: V. 22**

a) They are imprisoned in a dungeon: V. 22a

b) They are shut up in prison: V. 22b

c) They are punished after many days: V. 22c

**(Those who were once exalted are now humiliated)**

**A<sup>1</sup> Yahweh is King: V. 23**

a) The moon is dismayed, and the sun shamed: V. 23a

b) For Yahweh now reigns on Mount Zion: V. 23b

5 c) and before the elders – with great glory: V. 23c

**(Those who were once humiliated are now exalted together with the supreme ruler)**

10 A new piece begins in 24:21 introduced by the expression “*in that day*” (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא: cf. 25:9; 26:1; 27:1.2.12.13 for same or similar expression). All seven expressions indicating time in this context seem to point to the eschatological (Messianic) age.

15 This part also refers to the end times. The purpose of the contrastive structure of this passage is to elucidate the following message: Those who have reigned thus far are toppled and humiliated by Yahweh (**A**) and locked in a (dark) dungeon where they must await the day of judgment (**B**) while those who have been humiliated and oppressed thus far are raised up into the presence and glory of Yahweh (who now reigns on Zion in Jerusalem) (**A<sup>1</sup>**). The following contrasts can be observed in this passage: Those who were once exalted are now imprisoned below. Yet, those who have thus far been oppressed and humiliated (namely the *elders*, v. 23) are now raised up, i.e. brought to Mount Zion. Moreover, the Lord of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: *Yahweh Zebaoth*) has taken away the power of the  
20 armies of the heavens (עַל-צְבָא הַמָּרוֹם בְּמָרוֹם: *the powers in the heavens above*; this most definitely refers to Satan and his angels: cf. with the victory over Leviathan in Isa 27:1 and Dan 10:11ff; Eph 2:2; 6:12; Rev 12:7-9; 20:1-3) and bound them in a dungeon while he (finally) reigns on Zion as King. While the enemies of Yahweh are awaiting judgment in a dungeon (where it is **dark**; cf. Jud 1:6; 2Pe 2:4), the elders rejoice in the **glory** of Yahweh’s presence. Even the sun and moon fade in  
25 the presence of Yahweh’s radiating glory. The name “the Lord of Hosts” means, among other things, that God commands a heavenly army, i.e. heavenly angels who are, of course, in opposition to the fallen angels (i.e. demons). The demonic angels are deprived of power after having made common cause with the (wicked) kings of the earth. Even the elders in verse 23 are surrounded by angels in the same way as the kings of the earth are surrounded by demons in verse 21. The elders  
30 are surrounded by holy angels while the kings of the earth and the fallen angels must await Yahweh’s Final Judgment (cf. also Rev 4 for elders and angels).

35 As mentioned above, verses 21-23 prove that the passage 24:1-6 (where verse 6 states that a small number of people will survive the judgment) and the passage 24:16b-20 (where verses 19-20 announce the end of the world) are not contradictory. The text rather suggests the following chronology of eschatological events: God will judge the world because of its sin and only a few will survive (24:1-6).<sup>53</sup> We believe this passage refers to the judgments of the Great Tribulation, the time of the Antichrist described in chapters 6–19 in the Book of Revelation. The end of this judgment will coincide with the events described in Isa 24:22: The army of the heavens (the fallen  
40 angels) and the kings of the earth (faithless people hostile to the people of God) will be locked up. We believe the imprisonment of the armies of the heavens in Isa 24:22 corresponds to the events described in Rev 20:1-3. Rev 6–19: The Great Tribulation ends with the return of Christ and the direct damnation of the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Rev 19:11ff); Satan is only locked up at this time (Rev 20:1-3). Isaiah announces that the fallen angels and the wicked people (kings) of the  
45 earth will only be judged *after many days* (Hebrew: וַמֶּרֶב יָמִים [*wūmerob yāmīm*]) of imprisonment; therefore, a time interval must exist between the return of Christ and the Final Judgment. Isaiah states that this intermediate period will last “*many days*” while the apostle John (in the final book of the biblical canon) reveals that this intermediate period lasts 1000 years (the time period of 1000 years is mentioned 6 times in Rev 20:1-10).

<sup>53</sup> Compare passages Rev 6:8 and 9:15, which state that a quarter and a third of the earth’s population will perish in the judgments of the Great Tribulation.

Exegetes who do not acknowledge an intermediate kingdom between the return of Christ and the Final Judgment (end of the world) are at a loss to explain the expression “*after many days*” in 24:22.<sup>54</sup> For these scholars, the return of Christ is synonymous with the end of the world and the  
 5 Final Judgment, i.e. the judgment of unbelievers and fallen angels. However, Isaiah indicates that this will not be the case. The judgment only occurs after a long waiting period in the dungeon (abyss). We will address this again later on when we interpret Isa 26:14, 26:19 and 27:1ff. The mentioning of the elders in v. 23 is not only reminiscent of the passages in Revelation (chap. 4–5), but also of the Exodus motif (cf. Exo 24), which recurs multiple times in all three parts of the Book  
 10 of Isaiah (cf. e.g. Isa 11:11ff; 27:12-13; 43:16ff; 52:4ff; 63:9ff).

(b) *Song of gratitude: The hostile city is destroyed: 25:1-5*

This passage could be summarised with the following contrastive and antithetical pattern:

- 15 **A** Praise: Yahweh is exalted: V. 1  
**B** The hostile city is permanently destroyed: V. 2  
**C** The nations of the hostile city revere Yahweh: V. 3  
**B<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh protects the poor and needy: V. 4  
**A<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh silences the uproar of the ruthless: V. 5
- 20 Verse 1 provides a contrast to verse 2 and verse 5, the last verse of this passage: While Yahweh is exalted (v. 1: **A**), the hostile city and the ruthless foreigners (v. 2: **B**), i.e. the oppressors of the people of God, are destroyed or oppressed themselves (v. 5: **A<sup>1</sup>**). The oppressors are again contrasted with the poor and needy, the people oppressed by them but protected by Yahweh (V. 4: **B<sup>1</sup>**). In the central verse of this passage, it says that the city of nations will honour Yahweh and  
 25 revere his name (V. 3: **C**).

The prophet praises Yahweh in this passage for judging the oppressors (cf. Isa 12:1-6).

(c) *The feast on Mount Zion: 25:6-8*

This passage is structured as follows:

- 30 **A** Yahweh **prepares a feast for all nations** on this mountain V. 6  
**a** A feast of rich foods and aged wine  
**b** A feast with the best of meats and the finest of wines
- 35 **B** On this mountain Yahweh **destroys** V. 7  
**a** the shroud that enfolds *all peoples*  
**b** the sheet that covers *all nations*
- 40 **C** Yahweh **swallows up** death forever V. 8  
**a** He **wipes away** the tears from *all faces*  
**b** He **removes** his people’s disgrace from *all the earth*  
 for the Lord **has spoken**.

<sup>54</sup> As e.g. Joh. Lindblom, *Die Jesaja-Apokalypse: Jes. 24–27*. Lunds Universitets Årsskrift. N. F. Avd. 1. Volume 34. No. 3 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1938), p. 28. He says the author was unaware of his contradiction [“...without the author being aware of his self-contradiction.”)]. Other exegetes (e.g. Ernst Liebmann) simply change (amend) the traditional Hebrew text by striking “after” (אֲחֵרִי [min]). This alteration is completely arbitrary since 1QIs<sup>a</sup>, LXX, the Vulgata and other early texts confirm the Masoretic text.

Most exegetes regard 25:6 as a continuation of 24:21-23. The expression “*on this mountain*” in 25:6.7.10 refers back to Mount Zion in Jerusalem in 24:23. As kings offer up a feast for their inauguration, Yahweh also prepares a great feast for all nations on Mount Zion in Jerusalem at the beginning of his reign on earth (cf. Isa 2:1ff). Delitzsch points out that verse 6 says what Yahweh will provide for the people while verses 7-8 speak of what he will take away and destroy on that day.<sup>55</sup>

The Messianic Kingdom will begin with a great feast. Inevitably, the words of Jesus in Mat 8:10-11 come to mind. The proclamation that God “*will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples*” is interpreted by some exegetes within the meaning of 2Ko 3:15, i.e. Yahweh will put an end to spiritual blindness. Since the feast at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom is for those who belong to the Lord, we and many other commentators believe that taking away the shroud possibly means that, on that day, the Lord will put an end to suffering and grieving (cf. Isa 35:10; Rev 7:17 and then in the New Jerusalem cf. Rev 21:4). However, some people or peoples only come to faith in the Lord during the Messianic Kingdom (cf. Isa 66:18-20; Zec 14:16).

“*Death will be swallowed up*” V. 8a: For the resurrected believers this will already be a reality during the Millennium while the others only experience this after the Messianic Kingdom (after the thousand years: cf. Isa 26:14.19 and Rev 20:5-6). The promise will be entirely fulfilled in eternity (cf. Rev 21:4; 22:1-5). While those who reign with Yahweh during the Millennium (i.e. the resurrected believers) will no longer die (cf. Isa 25:8; 26:19; 1Co 15:54; Rev 20:4-6), those who still wear this earthly (mortal) body (but who can no longer be tempted by the devil because he is bound: cf. Rev 20:1-3; Isa 24:22) will once again reach a very old age (i.e. as the patriarchs from Adam to Noah; cf. Isa 65:20; Zec 8:4). Isa 65:18-20 suggests that death will remain a reality during the Messianic Kingdom. The promise in Isa 25:8a will only be entirely fulfilled with the New Creation in eternity (cf. Rev 21:4).

(d) *Song of jubilation: The joy on Mount Zion: 25:9-10a*

Quite amazingly, this passage provides a contrast to the following passage (25:10b-12). While joy reigns **above** on Mount Zion, the enemy Moab is brought **down** and destroyed (vv. 10b-12). While Yahweh’s hand (as it protects its people) rests on Zion, the enemy Moab is stretching out his hands in vain to save himself. *The hand of the Lord* (V. 10) is mentioned several times in the Book of Isaiah, e.g. in Isaiah’s prayer of faith (26:11).

(e) *Moab with its high fortified walls falls: 25:10b-12*

We as well as many other exegetes believe that Moab represents all nations that are hostile to God and his people. Isaiah intentionally mentions Moab as a contrast to Judah in 26:1. The high fortified walls of Moab are laid low, brought down to the dust while Yahweh strengthens the city in Judah (obviously Jerusalem). Moab in Isa 25 is representative for the entire world hostile to the people of God while Edom is used in Isa 34 (vv. 5-6) and 63 (v. 1) for the same purpose. Why are Moab and Edom used metaphorically here? We should also point out here that the Book of Isaiah repeatedly refers to the Exodus. As is well known, especially Moab and Edom opposed Israel when it entered the Promised Land.

### (3) The third part: Yahweh’s victory: Restoration and judgment: chap. 26

<sup>55</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Commentar über das Buch Jesaia*, 4<sup>th</sup> revised edition (Leipzig: Dörfling & Franke, 1889), p. 295.

The 21 verses (i.e. the words from the third “*in that day*” [בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא] in v. 1 to the fourth “*in that day*” in 27:1) follow a pattern<sup>56</sup> that elucidates the concentric and contrastive structure of this part:

- A** Restoration and trust: **Open the gates – that the nation may enter** (vv. 1-6)
- 5 a Rejoicing of the righteous nation on account of the fortified city (vv. 1-2)  
     b Peace to those who trust (v. 3)  
     b<sup>1</sup> Trust in the Lord forever (v. 4)  
     a<sup>1</sup> Destruction of the inhabitants who dwell on high in the lofty city (vv. 5-6)
- 10 **B** Profound yearning of the righteous and blindness of the godless (vv. 7-10)  
     a The level path of the righteous (v. 7)  
     b We wait for you (v. 8)  
     b<sup>1</sup> My soul yearns for you (v. 9a)  
     a<sup>1</sup> The wickedness and blindness of the godless (vv. 9b-10)
- 15 **C** **Yahweh’s** victory over the **foreign lords** (vv. 11-15)  
     a Yahweh! Your hand is lifted high – the enemies are consumed (v. 11)  
     b Yahweh! You brought peace for us – you did everything for us (v. 12)  
     c **Yahweh**, we only honour **your name – not other lords** (v. 13)  
     b<sup>1</sup> The spirits of the dead do not rise – you destroyed the enemies (v. 14)  
     a<sup>1</sup> Yahweh you enlarged the nation – you extended the borders (v. 15)
- B<sup>1</sup>** The longing of the **people** and the dew of light for **Yahweh’s dead** (vv. 16-19)  
     a Yahweh! We came to you in our distress (v. 16)  
     b We were like a pregnant woman about to give birth (v. 17)  
     b<sup>1</sup> We gave birth to wind – we did not bring salvation (v. 18)  
     a<sup>1</sup> Your dead will live, my corpses will rise (v. 19)
- 25 **A<sup>1</sup>** Trust and restitution: **Shut the doors – Yahweh moves out!** (vv. 20-21)  
     a Enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you (v. 20a)  
     b Hide yourself until his wrath has passed by (v. 20b).  
     b<sup>1</sup> Yahweh punishes the people of the earth for their sins (v. 21a)  
     a<sup>1</sup> The earth will **disclose** the blood; the earth will **conceal** its slain **no longer** (v. 21b)
- 30
- 35 Some observations and explanations regarding these concentric passages:

- 40 • **A** and **A<sup>1</sup>**: Here those who escaped are singing in the land of Judah (בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה); there the earth (הָאֶרֶץ) will no longer conceal the blood of the righteous (v. 21). Here the gates are to be opened so the righteous nation may enter (v. 2); there the people of Yahweh are to enter the rooms and shut the doors behind them (v. 20a). Here the people are encouraged to trust (vv. 3-4); there the people are urged to wait patiently (v. 20a). Here the people who dwell on high in the lofty city are cast down and trampled in the dust (vv. 5-6); there Yahweh punishes the people of the earth and causes the earth to reveal the blood (of the righteous) and no longer conceal its slain (v. 21).
- 45 • **B** and **B<sup>1</sup>**: Here Yahweh levels the path for the righteous (v. 7); there Yahweh awakens the dead from the dust (v. 19). Here the righteous wait and yearn for Yahweh (vv. 8-9); there the people writhe in labour like a pregnant woman who waits impatiently for the birth of her child (vv. 17-

<sup>56</sup> Similar in J. Alec Motyer, Motyer, *The Prophecy of ISAIAH: An Introduction & Commentary*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 212.

18). Here the godless act wickedly and disregard Yahweh's majesty (v. 10); there the distressed people turn to Yahweh (v. 16).

- 5 • **C:** Here Yahweh's hand is lifted high consuming the enemies (**a:** v. 11); there Yahweh enlarges the nation and extends the borders of the country (**a<sup>1</sup>:** V. 15). Here Yahweh creates peace and accomplishes all works (**b:** v. 12); there Yahweh punishes and brings all of his enemies to ruin (**b<sup>1</sup>:** v. 14). The people's allegiance to Yahweh is at the centre of this passage: *other lords* have ruled over us, but we (only) honour *your name* (**c:** V. 13). Interestingly, this verse is also structured concentrically: **a:** Yahweh is addressed with two divine names *Yahweh* and *Elohim*;
- 10 the second with the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural suffix (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: *Yahweh our God*) **b:** *other lords besides you* **a<sup>1</sup>:** two expressions referring to Yahweh with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular suffix: *your name and you alone*.

(a) *The song of victory in the land of Judah: 26:1-6*

15 The saved people sing for joy when Yahweh finally prevails in Jerusalem in the land of Judah. Judah is fortified (vv. 1-4) while the hostile city is cast to the ground (vv. 5-6).

(b) *The prophet's prayer of faith: 26:7-19*

At first glance, the asyndetic transition from verses 1-6 to verses 7-19 seems strange. Numerous critical exegetes have proposed various genesis hypotheses for this chapter or passage. However, once the concentric and contrastive structure of the various passages is recognised, it becomes

20 apparent that the asyndeton (disjointed) structure is intentional: verses 1-6: God promises the restoration of his people and his city and the destruction of the hostile city. However, the people must be patient; the people are urged in the respective passage (vv. 20-21) to enter the rooms and wait patiently until Yahweh moves out and destroys the enemies. Presently, the people still suffer like a woman writhing in pains of labour. In the central passage (vv. 7-19), the prophet prays a

25 prayer of faith in which he expresses his belief that God will intervene and save his people from the hands of the other lords by restoring the people's land (v. 15: national restoration) and resurrecting his dead (vv. 19, 21). Thus, the prophet suggests in his Apocalypse that national restoration (v. 15) and bodily resurrection (vv. 19, 21) will coincide. This is referred to as the *"the eschatological synthesis"*! The so-called asyndetic transition from verse 6 to 7 and the "apparent contradiction"

30 between verses 14 and 19 have led exegetes to assume multiple authorships or later insertions. In verse 14, it says that the dead will live no more; the spirits will not rise. However, verse 19 announces the resurrection of the dead. This verse clearly speaks of the bodily resurrection and not (merely) of a metaphoric national restoration of Israel.<sup>57</sup> Verse 21 confirms this. Especially chapter 27 (verses 2-13) speak of the national restoration of Israel at the end of time (*in that day*). The

35 question remains whether verses 14 and 19 are indeed contradictory.

Verse 19 says the dead will live again while verse 14 states they will live no more. This does not pose a problem for liberal theologians as some believe that verse 19 is merely a subsequent gloss: as

<sup>57</sup> In our dissertation, we mention that most exegetes believe that verse 19 speaks about the bodily resurrection; (only) perhaps a third of commentators interprets the passage as in Eze 37:11ff (the resurrection of bones as an image of national restoration) and Hos 14 as the national restoration of Israel. We also point out that 8-10 (or even more) translations (or interpretations) have been suggested for all four parts of verse 19. Certain translations are influenced by theological prejudices as e.g. the assumption that the belief in a bodily resurrection represents a later teaching in Judaism. It is impossible to address this question in depth within the context of this short commentary. We would like to refer the reader to our dissertation. At this point it should suffice to mention Heb 11:17-19 where the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes that Abraham already believed that God has the power to resurrect the dead (see also Rom 4:17).

e.g. the critical exegete Bernhard Duhm. Rudolph interprets it in a similar manner.<sup>58</sup> He states that **Isa 25:8** is universalistic while **Isa 26:19** is particularistic. Indeed, Isa 25:8 states that death will be swallowed up, but Isa 26:19 says that only those who belong to Yahweh are made alive again (“*your dead*”). For Rudolph, these two verses are contradictory. It is, therefore, not surprising that he proposes multiple authorships for these passages (which, according to Rudolph, have led to the contradiction). How should we as evangelicals answer this biblical criticism? **We believe that only Premillennialism can provide a satisfactory answer to modern biblical criticism that calls the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah into question:** The dead people in Isa 26:14 who live no more are the same as the kings in Isa 24:21-22 who must wait in the dungeon (i.e. in the realm of the dead) for the Final Judgment. They will not rise together with the believers in Isa 26:19 who belong to Yahweh (cf. Isa 14:20-21). A literal interpretation of Rev 20:1-10 provides complete clarity. It explicitly states that the unbelieving dead (in contrast to the deceased believers) will not be resurrected prior to the 1000 years (Rev 20:5), but only after Christ’s Kingdom, i.e. after the 1000 years (cf. the expression “*after many days*” in Isa 24:22). Although the unbelievers are made alive again (otherwise this would be contradictory to Dan 12:2 and Joh 5:29), Rev 20:14-15 states that they will be cast into the lake of fire or hell after their resurrection. This resurrection to damnation is described as the “*second death*”. The unbelievers will also rise in bodily form (as expressed in Dan 12:2, Joh 5:29 and 1Co 15:22ff), but their resurrection and eternal condition (in contrast to the “*first resurrection*” mentioned in Rev 20:5-6) is described as the “*second death*” (Rev 20:14 cf. also v. 6) since the unbelievers are already spiritually dead. Thus, the “contradiction” between Isa 26:14 and 26:19 is only apparent. Premillennialism, in our view, provides a plausible answer to the critic of Rudolph and many others while Amillennialism does not.<sup>59</sup>

Some comments about these verses:

**Vv. 7-10:** The painful experiences in the present and during the Great Tribulation (in the future).

**Vv. 11-15:** The oppressors are finally conquered, and the people of God can live in peace. This will only be possible when the godless are dead and no longer able to interfere in the events on the earth (cf. Isa 14:20-21). Their memory (at least on earth) will be wiped out.

**Vv. 16-19:** Yet, the restoration of Israel and the resurrection of the dead are still to come. The prophet and God’s people wait for salvation as a pregnant woman in labour waits for the birth of her child. The people can only pray to God (v. 16) but cannot help themselves. All of their efforts are in vain... “*wind*” (v. 18). The prophet trusts that Yahweh will resurrect his dead: V. 19a: ➔ „*But your dead will live, Lord; my corpses will rise*”: In Hebrew, this part forms a beautiful chiasm (chiasmus): „*They will live, your dead – my corpses will rise!*” The suffix „*your dead*” refers to the dead who belong to Yahweh and to whom the prophet is addressing these words. Verses 7-19 are undoubtedly Isaiah’s prayer. We believe that “*dew of lights*” in verse 19c is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, we learn that God will raise the dead by the power of his Holy Spirit (cf. e.g. Rom 8:11). ➔ “*Those who dwell in the dust*” in 26:19b also refers to the dead. These are the same as the “*spirits*”, i.e. the shades (“*the rephaim*” in Hebrew) in 26:19d. The same word “*rephaim*” is used in 26:14 for the dead. This is further proof that, if 26:14 refers to actual dead persons, the dead in 26:19 who live again are also physically dead people who are resurrected (and not merely a metaphoric reference to national restoration). These verses speak of bodily resurrection. Therefore, the belief in an individual resurrection of humans was not only part of

<sup>58</sup> Wilhelm Rudolph, *JESAJA 24 – 27*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, 4<sup>th</sup> series, booklet 10 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1933), p. 48-49.

<sup>59</sup> For more on these questions, refer to the chapter about the Millennium in our brochure on biblical Eschatology as well as our commentary on chapter 20 in our brochure on the Revelation of John.

Persian religions (Zoroastrianism, Mazdaism) as some critics claim, but also part of Israel's belief system. Isaiah had spoken of it earlier.

(c) *Exhortation: Protection and judgment: 26:20-21*

The following contrast between this passage and its counterpart (verses 1-6) is conspicuous: In verses 1-6 the prophet's gaze is directed towards the glorious future as he urges the righteous nation **to open the gates and enter** (the glorious city). While as here, in verses 20-21, the prophet sees the distress of his time and the coming judgment of the world; therefore, he exhorts his people **to enter the room and shut the door**. The contrast (a parallelism that contains a message of encouragement) becomes apparent:

My people, **enter**



**and shut the door**

Yahweh **moves out**



and **opens** (discloses) the earth

Presently, the people must wait **a little while** (20b: כְּמִעֲט־רִנָּה) until Yahweh's wrath and judgment have passed and the earth's inhabitants have been punished. "*Little while*" explains the embedding of the prayer in verses 7-19 between the promising outlooks in 24:21 to 26:6 and 27:1ff. It is the prayer of the righteous in light of the delay of salvation announced in 24:21 to 26:6 (cf. 2Pe 3:9ff for the apparent "delay of salvation"). God's people (Isaiah's people) are urged to hide because of the impending judgment (most certainly the judgments of the Great Tribulation; cf. Isa 24:1-6). Verse 21 is actually a summary of Rev 6:1 to 19:21. The Word of God tells us that nothing is hidden from God's sight (cf. e.g. Heb 4:13). Everything will be brought to light on that day and God will judge fairly. Those who have been oppressed will be rehabilitated, and the oppressors will be judged (cf. 2Th 1:7-9; Rev 6:9-11).

**(4) The fourth part: Destruction of enemies and restoration of Israel: chap. 27**

Numerous exegetes and theologians have contested the authenticity of chapter 27.<sup>60</sup> In particular verses 2-11 are regarded as later additions.<sup>61</sup> However, we are convinced that the structure of the text speaks for the authenticity of the entire chapter. This part is also structured concentrically; the passage that speaks about the *sine qua non* condition for restoration is positioned exactly in the middle:

**A** *In that day: Yahweh's victory* over enemies – the monster of the sea (v. 1)

**B** *In that day: the vineyard* – Israel's restoration (vv. 2-6)

**C** **Israel's punishment – Destruction of the fortified city** (vv. 7-11)

**B<sup>1</sup>** *In that day: Threshing of grains* – Gathering of Israel (v. 12)

**A<sup>1</sup>** *In that day: Return of Israel* and worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem (v. 13)

The five passages form a coherent whole. It is, therefore, highly improbable that any of these passages were added later on. The expression "in that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא), which occurs four times in

<sup>60</sup> As e.g. Otto Plöger, op. cit., p. 89, 93, 96-97 and Otto Kaiser, op. cit., p. 179-185.

<sup>61</sup> As e.g. Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja: 2. Teilband: Jesaja 13–27*. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament. Ed. Siegfried Hermann and Hans Walter Wolff. Volume X/2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), p. 903-904, 1001ff. He "discerns" 5 different additions in these 10 verses alone!



this context, suggests that the *terminus a quo* for the described events corresponds to 24:21; the events refer to the same era as those in 25:9 and 26:1. It is significant that only the central passage, verses 7-11, does not begin with the expression “in that day”. First, the conditions of restoration – i.e. the restoration addressed in passages A, A<sup>1</sup>, B and B<sup>1</sup> – must be fulfilled by cleansing the people from all idol worship (cf. V. 9); only then will Yahweh restore his people “in that day”.

Images are ordered antithetically and chiasmically, which contrasts the eschatological fate of the people of God with their enemies:

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 10 | A Vv 2-6:      Restoration of Israel            | B Vv 7-9:      Punishment and cleansing of Israel         |
|    | B <sup>1</sup> Vv 10-11: Destruction of enemies | A <sup>1</sup> Vv 12-13: Return and restoration of Israel |

The serpent, however, must first be conquered as a condition for this glorious future (v. 1). As mentioned above – the central verse of verses 7-11, namely verse 9, is positioned at the centre of this concentric structure. No restitution without conversion! The claim that one or several of these verses (e.g. verse 9) was added later seems, simply put, unfounded in light of the artful structure and content.

(a)      *Leviathan (Satan) judged: 27:1*

20 **V. 1: ➔ “Leviathan”** (cf. Hio 40:25; Psa 74:14; 104:26) is the name for a sea monster. The expressions ➔ “*the gliding and coiling serpent*” (in Hebrew: “*naḥaš*”) and “*the monster of the sea*” (or “*the dragon of the sea*”; in Hebrew: **Thannin**) are also mentioned. *Thannin* is translated as *great monster* (Eze 29:3), *great creature of the sea* (Gen 1:21) or even as *snake* or *serpent* (cf. Exo 7:10; Deu 32:33 etc.). Some exegetes believe that these three expressions are symbolic for the three great enemies of Israel: Assyria, Egypt and Babylon. However, the name “Leviathan” can also refer to the power of Satan, which is at work behind the powers of the world: cf. Isa 14:1-14; Eze 28:12-14; 2Th 2:9; Rev 11:7; 12:3; 13:1. Daniel chapter 10 grants us a special glimpse into the events of the unseen world and shows us that demonic powers influence world powers (cf. Eph 6:10ff). Gen 3:1 (the serpent) and Rev 12:9 (the ancient serpent) unmistakably refer to Satan. Several exegetes (Bible-critical, of course) believe that this verse is a later gloss and does not fit the context, which is not true since 26:19 speaks about the resurrection of the righteous and 26:20-21 addresses retribution and rehabilitation. The same context can be found in Rev 19:11 to 20:10: The world is judged (Rev 19:15-21; cf. Isa 24:1-20) and Satan is locked up (Rev 20:1-3; cf. Isa 24:21-22); the believers are resurrected (Rev 20:4; cf. Isa 26:19; 25:8) and reign with the Lord (Rev 20:4-6; 5:10; Isa 24:23; 25:6-8). “Common” people who survive the Great Tribulation and Armageddon will still be on earth at that time (cf. Rev 7:1-8; 12:13-16; Isa 24:6.13; Zec 13:7-9: Israel but also other nations: Cf. a quarter dies in Rev 6, a third in Rev 9... but not everyone: in Isa 24:6.13 as well). Those who survive are ushered into the Messianic Kingdom; Satan is imprisoned and no longer able to tempt humankind (Rev 20:1-3; cf. Isa 24:22; 27:1). Israel is restored as a nation (cf. Isa 27:2-13) when Christ returns (cf. Isa 24:23; 59:20-21; Zec 14:4.9.16; Rom 11:25-27; Rev 19:11ff). The devil can no longer incite the nations to fight against Israel (cf. Dan 10 and Rev 16:12-16) after he is bound (Isa 27:1), and then, at last, all Israelites who survive the Great Tribulation can return to their homeland and finally live in peace (cf. Isa 27:2-13).

(b)      *The vineyard song: Israel's restoration: 27:2-6*

45 This passage is structured concentrically and contrastively:

A      *In that day: a **vineyard** – sing about it! (V. 2)*

**B** Yahweh himself is the **protector** who waters and guards it (v. 3)

**C** He is not angry – but vows to fight against briars and thorns! (v. 4)

5 **B<sup>1</sup>** Only those who come to him for **refuge** and make peace with him (v. 5)

**A<sup>1</sup>** *In days to come:* Israel will fill the earth with **fruit** (v. 6)

10 Some comments regarding the concentric structure of this passage: The expression “*in that day*” and the “*vineyard*” theme in verse 2 (A) correspond to “*in days to come*” and “*fruit*” in verse 6 (A<sup>1</sup>); the three nouns in verse 5 “*refuge*” and “*peace*” twice (B<sup>1</sup>) correspond to the image of Yahweh as the “*protector*” who *waters* and *guards* his vineyard in verse 3 (B). The middle of the passage speaks of the enemies against whom Yahweh is fighting, i.e. the *briars* and *thorns* in verse 4 (C) who, in turn, are contrasted with the *vineyard* (v. 2) and *fruit* (v. 6):

15 **Vv. 2-6:** Israel, Jacob is restored as a fruitful vineyard. God will conquer the enemy and bring peace to Israel. The vineyard (v. 2) is a metaphor for Israel: cf. Isa 5:1-7.

(c) *Punishment and judgment: 27:7-11*

20 The passage has the following concentric and contrastive structure:

**A** Israel, in contrast to its enemies, is only punished with exile (vv. 7-8)

**B** The sin of Israel is atoned for by eradicating idol worship (v. 9)

25 **A<sup>1</sup>** However, the fortified city is desolated and shown no mercy (vv. 10-11)

**Vv. 7-9:** Israel must first be punished as a condition to being permanently cured and cleansed from idol worship.

30 **Vv. 10-11:** However, Israel’s enemies are desolated.

(d) *Return and restoration of Israel: 27:12-13*

35 **Vv. 12-13:** Israel in contrast is finally restored to its country. The people will live in the land between the Euphrates and the brook of Egypt: cf. Gen 15:18; Eze 47:19. The *brook of Egypt* is called “*Wadi-el-Arish*” today.

The contents of the verses 2-13 can be summarised with the following thematic chiasm:

Vv. 2-6: Israel will be **restored** as a **A B** It must, however, be cleansed and **punished** first (vv. 7-9)

40 Vv. 10-11: Enemies are **desolated B<sup>1</sup> A<sup>1</sup>** Israel is to be restored to its land (vv. 12-13)

45 Isaiah’s Apocalypse includes astonishing contrasts and parallelisms, which also speak to the cohesiveness of the text:

**The theme of the two cities:**

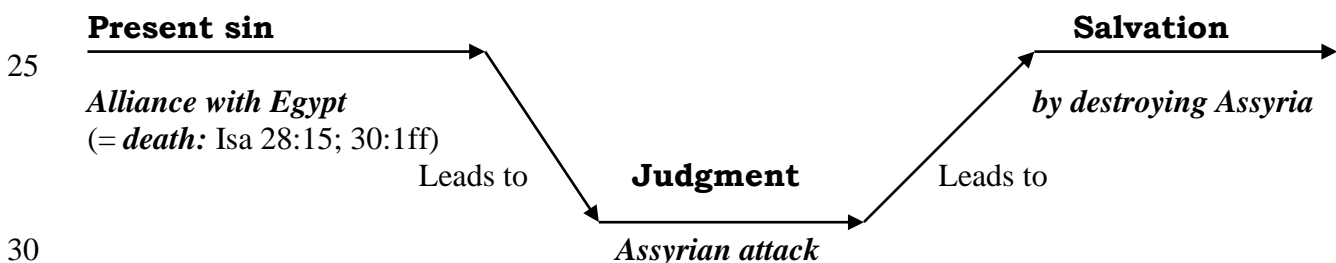
24:10:	The godless city is ruined	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	Jerusalem, Zion, is glorified: 24:23
25:1-5:	The godless city is destroyed	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	The feast on Yahweh's mountain: 25:6-8
25:9-10a:	Joy on this mountain	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	The fortress Moab is laid low: 25:10b-12
26:1-4:	The city in Judah sings	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	The lofty city is laid low: 26:5-6
5 27:10:	The hostile city stands desolate:	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	The holy mountain, Jerusalem: 27:12-13

### **A remnant from the nations and a remnant from Israel will survive the Great Tribulation:**

- A remnant from the nations: 24:6.13-16; 25:3.
- 10 • A remnant in Israel: 24:23; 25:4; 25:9; 26:1.20; 27:2-9.12-13.
- Neither wine nor joy for the enemies: 24:7-10.
- Wine and vineyard for the people of God: 25:6; 27:2.
- 15 • The enemy devastated in the desert: 24:12; 25:2; 27:10-11.
- The people of God in a fruitful land: 27:2.6.
- The memory of the unjust is forgotten: 26:14.
- The righteous dead are not forgotten: 26:19.21.

## 20 **4. Warning to Samaria and Jerusalem: chap. 28–33**

This long passage must be understood in light of chapters 36–37. Isaiah warns of the coming judgment and the attempt to resist Assyria by forging an alliance with Egypt:



Isaiah speaks five “woes” against his people (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1) and a “woe” against Israel’s enemy Assyria (33:1)!

### 35 **a.) Prophecy concerning the fall of Samaria and a warning to Jerusalem: chap. 28**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> woe:** The Assyrian King Sargon defeated the city of Samaria in 722 BC. Their sins are listed: pride and drunkenness (vv. 1.3.7.8); judgment comes swiftly (vv. 2.4).

40 **Vv. 5-6:** A remnant is spared. This is the true Israel (cf. 10:20-23), which may refer to the rest of Samaria or Judah (cf. Eze 37: reunification of Ephraim and Judah during end times).

**Vv. 7-13:** Jerusalem commits the same sins; even the prophets are drunk (v. 7):

- The people do not listen to the true prophets who proclaim the Word of God (vv. 9-10).

- The resulting judgment: God speaks to the people in a foreign language. The apostle Paul quotes this verse in 1Co 14:21 as he explains the futility of speaking in tongues in church if no one is there to interpret and explain what is being said. This prophecy concerning Samaria was fulfilled with the Assyrian invasion. At the time, the people were forced to hear the Assyrian language, especially those who were taken into captivity in Nineveh (v. 11).
- God will use “a strange tongue” to speak to those who stubbornly refuse to listen to his voice; he will speak in the language of judgment (vv. 12-13).

**Vv. 14-29:** A warning to those in positions of authority in Jerusalem:

- The covenant with death and the realm of the dead (Sheol), vv. 14-15: This is most likely symbolic language for the political alliance Jerusalem forged with Egypt against Assyria. The people put their trust in a political agreement rather than in Yahweh (cf. chapters 30 and 31).
- ➔ **“A stone in Zion”**: cf. 1Pe 2:8; Dan 2:34-35; Psa 118:22. This prophecy points to Christ. Why a prophecy about the Messiah in this chapter? The Messiah, the future King of Israel, is contrasted with the unfaithful leaders of Israel at the time. The passage justifies an eschatological interpretation as the covenant mentioned in verse 15 can also be interpreted prophetically as the alliance Israel will make with the Antichrist in end times (cf. Dan 9:27; Mat 24:15) and not merely as the alliance with Egypt during the time of Isaiah (v. 16).
- All those who trust in a treacherous alliance rather than in the Lord will be judged. Only Yahweh can save the people from the enemy (through the cornerstone, the Messiah: vv. 17-22).
- Just as a farmer knows how to cultivate his field, God also knows how to deal with his people; the people deserve punishment if God decrees it (vv. 23-29).

## b.) Siege and salvation of Israel: chap. 29

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> woe:** The first “woe” against Jerusalem (Ariel = *the lion of God* or *the altar of God*) refers to idol worship (hypocritical worship): Although the inhabitants maintain “the cycle of festivals” (v. 1), their hearts are far from God (v. 13). The second “woe” is most likely directed against the alliance that was established with Egypt without informing the prophets (cf. v. 15 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> “woe”). God will besiege Jerusalem (v. 3): cf. chap. 36–37; this prophecy was fulfilled through Sennacherib, King of Assyria! However, the events described in verses 6-8 most likely also point to a future fulfilment: cf. Zec 14:1ff, which actually speaks about “the nations” while only Assyria is mentioned during the time of Isaiah. The disobedience of the people of God leads to a judgment of blindness (vv. 9-12), but the Lord will once again open the eyes of some of his people (vv. 18-24).

## c.) Condemnation of the alliance with Egypt: chap. 30–31

The **fourth and fifth “woes”** are pronounced against those who have established an alliance with Egypt rather than trusting in the Lord (30:1-3 and 31:1-3; cf. 2Ki 18:24-25):

- Egypt cannot protect Jerusalem against Assyria: 30:1.7; 31:1.3.
- Yahweh will protect Jerusalem from the attacks of its enemies: 31:5
- The people should trust in Yahweh: 30:15.
- Yahweh will judge the enemy and save Israel: 30:18-33; 31:7-9.

This passage also does not only refer to a near fulfilment, but as well to an eschatological fulfilment in the end times:

1. Near fulfilment through Assyria: 30:31; 31:8.

2. Fulfilment in the end times: 30:23-26 (cf. Joe 3:18; see Isa 30:28: *the nations*; not only one nation, i.e. Assyria, as was the case during the time of Isaiah, but rather all nations as also referenced e.g. in Zec 14:1ff [see above], a passage that clearly refers to the end times, i.e. the time of Christ's return).

## 5 d.) Just governance in the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 32

**Vv. 1-8:** In the **Kingdom of Peace** the king and his princes will judge justly!

**Vv. 9-14:** Between the announcement of the Kingdom of Peace in verses 1-8 and 15-20, we find a **warning** to the complacent women and the merry city. The theme or image of thorns and briars is taken up again in this passage (see Isa 5:6, 27:4, etc.).

**Vv. 15-20:** **Justice** and **peace** will reign; the **earth will be fertile**: v. 15 (cf. Joe 2:28; Zec 12:10: the outpouring of the [Holy] Spirit).

## 15 e.) Prophecy concerning the destruction of Assyria and the salvation of Jerusalem: chap. 33

This **sixth** (and final) “**woe**” is pronounced against Assyria, Judah's enemy. 2Ki 18:14-17 and Isa 36-37 gives the historical background for that era. The Assyrian King Sennacherib did not honour the alliance with Judah but attacked the land. As before, in chapter 10, Isaiah again pronounces judgement over this enemy. The fulfilment of this prophecy is reported in chapters 36-37.

20 The deliverance of Jerusalem described here also points to a later fulfilment in the end times: cf. v. 17: ➔ “*Your eyes will see the king in his beauty...!*” This is a reference to the Messianic King, i.e. Jesus Christ, when he returns in his kingdom.

25 **V. 24:** No inhabitant will then say, “*I am ill!*” Jerusalem's population will (finally) be forgiven (cf. Zec 12:9-10).

## 5. Prophecy concerning the day of vengeance of the Lord and his Kingdom of Peace: chap. 34-35

30 Chapters 24-27 are, as mentioned above, often referred to as “Isaiah's Great Apocalypse” while chapters 34-35 are sometimes referred to as “Isaiah's Little Apocalypse”. In particular verses 34:8 and 35:4 accurately summarise these two chapters, which exclusively deal with the end times. Yahweh will avenge the enemies of Israel and grant salvation to his people (*the day of vengeance*: cf. 61:2b):

- 35 • Judgement descends on all nations: 34:2; above all on Edom, Israel's arch enemy (v. 6), whose country will be desolated forever (vv. 9-15). As already indicated previously, in this instance Edom most likely represents all nations hostile to Israel, the people of God, as also in Isa 63:1ff and Moab in Isa 25:10b (cf. Heb 12:16: Esau the Profane).
- 40 • Judgment will also extend to the heavens (the entire universe) and its starry host (34:4). Some exegetes believe that “*the starry host*” in this context refers to demonic powers while others are convinced that it refers to stars. We also favour the latter interpretation. However, in our view, Isa 24:21 refers to fallen angels. Yet, the text in 34:4 says that all the stars in the sky will be dissolved (compare with Rev 20:11), possibly an allusion to the final end of the current universe (cf. Isa 65:17; 2Pe 3:9-12). The fallen angels, however, are not annihilated but judged.

- Israel will be restored: 35:1-2.7. In our view, the entire chapter 35 refers to the Millennial Kingdom.
- The people of Israel will be saved: 35:5-6.8-10.

5 The contrast between chap. 34 and chap. 35 is unmistakable: Edom (and with it all nations of the world who are hostile towards God and Israel) will become a desert while Israel returns to its homeland and will be fruitful.

## 6. Parenthetical historical report: chap. 36–39

10 Chapters 7–10 deal with the era of King Ahaz, chapters 36–39 refer to his son Hezekiah. The chapters that include the announcement of the Babylonian exile and the end of Israel's royal autonomy in 39:6-7 are a transition to the second part of the Book of Isaiah, i.e. chapters 40–55, in which the prophet beholds the people of Israel in exile. Summarising comments:

- 15 • Hezekiah, who is mentioned 35 times in these four chapters, is at the centre of the described events.
- Chapters 36–37 address the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Assyria and Judah. Sennacherib conquered the land of Judah and sent his field commander to Jerusalem with a mighty army to demand unconditional surrender. But Hezekiah and Isaiah trusted in the Lord who destroyed the Assyrian army in one night (37:36), most likely with a plague (cf. 2Ki 19:35; 20 2Ch 32:20ff).

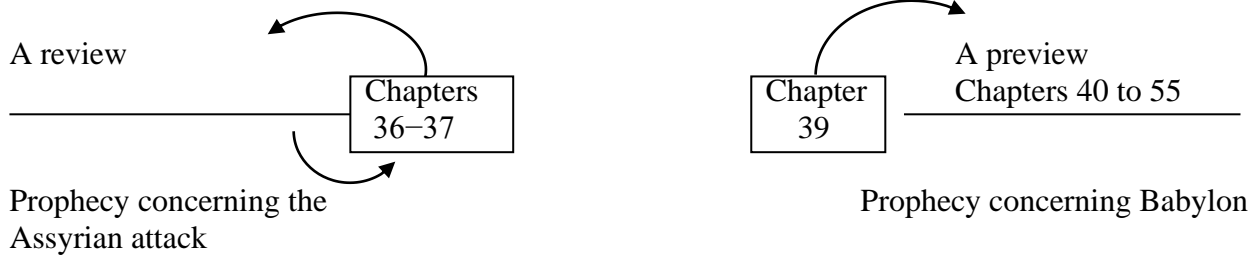
### Practical applications:

- **36:4ff:** The enemy's strategy is always to discourage the servants of God.
- 25 • **Chap. 37:** God can always resolve the problems of his trusting servants even if circumstances seem hopeless (cf. Mat 28:18; Exo 14:3-14; 2Ch 20:15-17.22; 1Co 10:13).
- **Chap. 38:** Concerning Hezekiah's illness (cf. 2Ki 20:1-11): Kroeker claims that the events described in chapters 38 and 39 occurred prior to those reported in chapters 36 and 37. According to 2Ki 18:2, Hezekiah reigned for 29 years (719-691 BC.). His illness, reported in 30 chapter 38, must have begun at the midpoint of his reign since he remained alive for another 15 years according to 38:5. Sennacherib's conquest, who only inherited his father's throne in 705 BC., occurred during the fifth year of his reign, i.e. 9 years before Hezekiah's passing. Presumably Isaiah (or the person who collected the prophecies and writings of Isaiah) deliberately placed the events involving Babylon's delegates at the end of the book's first part since this episode (i.e. chapter 39) is a suitable transition to the events in chapters 40–48 (the 35 Babylonian exile). Verse 38:6 confirms that the events in chapters 38–39 occurred prior to chapters 36–37, which address the fulfilment of God's announcement in 38:6 (namely the salvation of Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrians). **38:21-22:** Some exegetes believe that these verses were originally positioned between verses 6 and 7 or that they were added later by a scribe. At any rate, the Septuagint already included these two verses. These words can also be 40 found in 2Ki 20:7-8. Concerning Hezekiah's healing: ➔ "*A poultice of figs*": It is said that this refers to a medication that matures ulcers and thus accelerates healing (cf. Bible Annotée and Kroeker). God can work miracles, but he also created the natural world and can employ natural remedies. **The sign in 38:8b:** The "*sun went back*" on the sundial (stairway of the sundial): 2Ki 45 20:11 states that the shadow retreated. Several men of God in the Old Testament asked God for a sign: cf. e.g. Jud 6:36ff (Gideon); Exo 4 (Moses). God performed a miracle at the time, which we cannot explain with our limited human knowledge and understanding. For more information

regarding this miracle, we recommend the Bible Annotée (French!).<sup>62</sup> A similar phenomenon occurred when Israel conquered Canaan under Joshua (Jos 10:12-13).<sup>63</sup>

- **Chap. 39:** The Babylonian delegation: cf. 2Ki 20:12-19. V.2: Hezekiah's pride and arrogance: Hezekiah seems to have forgotten that all he had was given to him by the grace of God (cf. 1Ti 6:7). **V. 8b:** Such an egotistic attitude is truly regrettable: Hezekiah thought only of himself. We should act responsibly towards future generations.

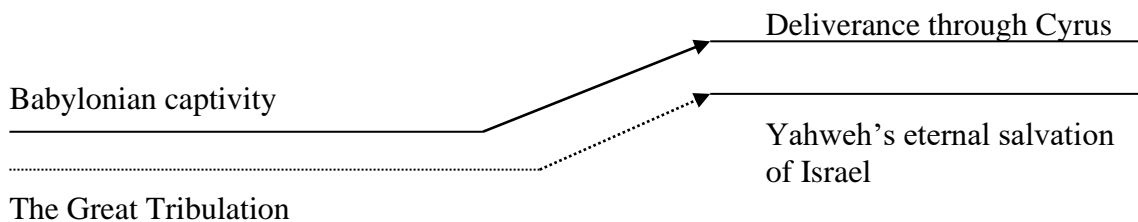
The fact that the author announces the Babylonian exile here (vv. 5-7) suggests that chapters 40ff were written by the same author as chapters 1 to 39!



## B. Humiliation: Preview of the exile and salvation: chap. 40–55

The first part of the book (chapters 1–39) deals with salvation, especially chapters 2; 4; 11; 25–27 and 35 (other passages mainly talk about judgment); the second part (chapters 40–55) also addresses the topic of judgment in chapters 46–47 as well as in a few individual verses (other passages are mainly concerned with salvation).

### 1. Deliverance through Cyrus: chap. 40–48



Although the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity, brought about by the Medo-Persian Cyrus, is at the heart of these chapters, this passage (chapters 40–48) also gives information about Yahweh himself and about his eternal salvation (cf. 45:17).

The following is a list of topics that appear (repeatedly) in this section:

- Yahweh's glory: 42:8; 43:21.25; 48:9-11.

<sup>62</sup> Frédéric Godet, 'Ésaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations', AT 7 in *Bible Annotée*, Neudruck (St-Légier: P.E.R.L.E., 1985), p. 188.

<sup>63</sup> It has come to our attention that Joshua 10 perhaps indicates an additional 23 hours and 40 minutes while Isa 38 and 2Ki 20 merely refer to 20 minutes. When added up, these two time periods exactly equal one additional day. The possibility that a rotational interruption of the earth around the sun occurred at some point over the course of the earth's history has been discussed in certain astronomical circles. We are, however, "not experts in this field" and therefore cannot speak on this theory.

- Yahweh, the only God: about 11 times (e.g. in 43:11; 45:5. 6. 21. 22; 46:9).
- Yahweh's sole claim to true prophecy: 41:20; 42:9; 44:6-7; 45:6-11; 48:3.
- The futility of idol worship: 40:19-20; 41:6-7.21-24.29; 44:9-20; 46:1-2.5-7; 48:5.
- Election and salvation of Israel: especially 44:1-6; 46:3-4.13.
- 5 • *The servant*: almost always refers to **Israel**: e.g. 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2.21; 45:4; 48:20; referring to the **Messiah**: 42:1ff and 49:1ff (cf. Isa 50:4; 52:13ff; Mar 10:45; Act 3:13.26; 4:27.30).
- →The phrase “*do not fear!*”: 41:10.13.14; 43:1.5; 44:2.8.

### a.) Yahweh as the initiator of salvation: chap. 40

This chapter can be divided into the following two parts:

- 10
- Vv. 1-11:** The liberation of Israel by Yahweh, the shepherd (v. 11), is announced!
- Vv. 12-31:** God's sublimity towards men and their idols.

In his “foreword” to the description of God's nature, Isaiah insists on the fact that:

- 15
- Israel's salvation is dependent on the coming of the Lord (the Messiah in the N.T.): cf. vv. 2-3.5. Verse 3 is quoted in Mat 3:3 and shows that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled through John the Baptist. V. 5: As already mentioned above, the expression “*for the mouth of the LORD has spoken*” appears here as well as in 1:20 and 58:14.
  - 20 • All people are like grass, but the Word of the Lord endures forever: vv. 6-8 (this passage is quoted in 1Pe 1:24-25).

In the following verses Yahweh is portrayed as:

- 25
- Judge (he exacts revenge): v. 10.
  - Shepherd: v. 11.
  - The almighty: v. 12 (cf. Mat 28:18).
  - The omniscient one: vv. 13-14 (cf. Psa 139; Heb 4:13).
  - The incomparable one: vv. 15-21 (he is unique).
  - 30 • The sovereign one: vv. 22-26 (cf. Rev 19:11-15: King of kings, Lord of lords).
  - The one who sees all: vv. 27-28 (cf. Psa 139; Heb 4:13).
  - The one who gives to everyone as needed: vv. 29-31 (cf. Mat 6:25-34). Verse 31 is often quoted as an affirmation of faith: “*but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*”

### 35 b.) Yahweh (and not the idols) installs Cyrus as world ruler; Yahweh is also the one who elects and saves Israel: chap. 41

Take note:

- 40
- The prophecy concerning Cyrus the Medo-Persian: vv.1-5.25 (cf. 44:28; 45:1)
  - The futility of idol worship: vv. 6-7.21-24.29.
  - The election and salvation of Israel: vv. 8-19 (Vv. 13-14a: “*...Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob, little Israel...*”). See v. 8 where Israel is also referred to as “my servant, Jacob” and “offspring of Abraham”, the friend of God. For referencing Abraham by name, see also 29:22 and 63:16, i.e. in all three parts of the
  - 45 book.
  - The provocation of idolatrous prophecies: vv. 21-24.



### c.) Yahweh's servant (1<sup>st</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 42

In the second part of the Book of Isaiah, we can discern four “Obed-Yahweh-Songs”, that is, four songs for the Servant of Yahweh: see 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9 and 52:13 to 53:12.

- 5 Who is “*the Servant of the Lord*”? The servant can only be identified in light of the overall context. In verses 1-18, the servant is most definitely the **Messiah**:

- He has been chosen by God (one in whom I delight): v. 1.
- He is equipped by God (with the Spirit): v. 1.
- 10 • He is sent to bring justice to the nations: v. 1.
- He is the mediator for the covenant with God (cf. similar in 49:6): v. 6.
- „...*new things I declare!*“ (cf. 43:19 and 48:6) V. 9.
- As a light, he will bring justice and righteousness to the gentiles: vv. 1-12.
- Yet, he will also judge the nations: vv. 13-18.
- 15

However, verses 19-25 talk about **Israel** as the *Servant of the Lord* who has failed to realise its purpose. One could say: **The Servant of the Lord** has come to realise (vv. 1-18) that which the people of Israel (who should also have been *Yahweh's servant*) failed to do (vv. 19-25). As already mentioned in the introduction, the prophet contrasts the faithful Servant of Yahweh (the coming Messiah) with the unfaithful servant, i.e. Israel (v. 24).

20 V. 25: “...*but they did not take it to heart.*” cf. with 57:11: “...*nor taken this to heart*”

### d.) Yahweh saves Israel: chap. 43

- Once more, the Exodus motif emerges in verses 2-3.16-17.20.
- The purpose of this divine act of salvation is the glorification of Yahweh: cf. vv. 7.21.
- 25 • V. 11: “*I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no saviour*” is reminiscent of Joh 14:6 (Jesus' claim of exclusivity) and Act 4:12.
- Vv. 18-19: “*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!*” In this context, the former things refer to the Exodus from Egypt. Yet, what is meant by “a new thing” (cf. 42:9; 48:6)? In the nearer future, this most likely refers to the Exodus from Babylon and the return to Jerusalem on account of Cyrus (cf. 44:27; 45:1 and 48:14.20), however, in the distant future arguably also the eschatological return of Israel to its land (cf. vv. 5-7, which addresses the return of Israel from all parts of the world).
- 30 • Yahweh saves out of love (vv. 4.25) and not because Israel deserves salvation: vv. 22-23.
- Yahweh saves people out of love (vv. 4.25) and not because Israel has somehow earned its salvation: vv. 22-23.
- 35 • The salvation of Israel includes the forgiveness of sin: vv. 24-25.

### e.) Yahweh – and not the idols – saves Israel: chap. 44

The following structure emerges in this chapter:

40 **A** Yahweh saves (vv. 1-8)

**B** The uselessness of idols (vv. 9-20)

**A<sup>1</sup>** Yahweh saves (through Cyrus) (vv. 21-28).

45

- Israel was chosen, created, formed and equipped by Yahweh: vv. 1-3.

- Yahweh also forgives Israel's sins: v. 22.
- Isaiah emphasises the uselessness and ridiculousness of idol worship since Israel tends to, time and again, regress into this practice. He uses the following illustration: A man who creates a god out of wood (vv. 9-20). This message is primarily directed at the people of God and not at the gentiles. However, it is a truth that clearly applies to all humans who have been deceived by the illusion of idolatry (cf. Rom 1:18-31).
- Yahweh will save Israel through Cyrus: vv. 21-28. This is further explained in chapter 45: Exodus and Cyrus!

## f.) Yahweh will save Israel through Cyrus: chap. 45

10 The following passages in the Book of Isaiah contain a prophecy concerning Cyrus the Medo-Persian: 41:2.4.25; 44:28; 45:1-5.13; 46:11; 48:15 (allusions can already be found in 13:17-19 and 21:2-9):

15 **Vv. 1-8: God's sovereignty in world history: Cyrus**, the gentile king, does not act according to his will alone, but has rather been chosen and equipped by Yahweh: **vv. 1-4:** Therefore, Isaiah was given the task to announce Israel's deliverer from Babylonian exile by name about 150 years prior to the event. **Vv. 5-8:** This chapter alone contains six statements about God's monarchy (God alone is sovereign: vv. 5.6.14.18.21.22). **V. 7** cf. with Amo 3:6-8. **V. 8** will ultimately be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom (cf. 27:6; 55:13).

20 **Vv. 9-13: God's sovereignty as creator of the world and over humans. V. 9:** "*Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker*" cf. Rom 9:20ff). For the image of the potter, cf. Jer 18:6. **V. 10:** Children are warned to not reproach their parents for begetting them! This word is especially relevant in our time in which the state is increasingly trying to incapacitate parents (especially the left; Frankfurt School). **Vv. 11-12:** God created heaven and earth; who would dare reproach him? **V. 13:** God raised up Cyrus in order to free Israel, his people. Therefore, God also has the power to guide the hearts of the mightiest kings of the earth in accordance with his wishes, which is reminiscent of the key verse in the Book of Daniel: **Dan 2:21! Cyrus** is not acting for his own benefit but is rather fulfilling (consciously or unconsciously) the plan of God. The famous Jewish historian Flavius Josephus allegedly said that Cyrus had been informed about the prophecy concerning him (cf. our comment above).<sup>64</sup>

35 **Vv. 14-17: The Lord will save Israel**, and the (gentile) nations will be subject to Israel. The enemies of God's people and the idol worshipers shall be put to shame, which will only be fully fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom.

40 **Vv. 18-19: Again, a reference to God's sovereignty in creation and throughout history**, which is why he alone can precisely predict world events (another indirect reference to Israel's salvation through Cyrus).

**Vv. 20-25:** The Lord calls on all people to turn away from idols and draw near to him, the one true God, because only he can save them (vv. 20-22). In verses 23-25, the Lord says that a day will come when every knee will bow before him and every tongue confess that salvation and redemption can only be found in him. Cf. verses 23-24 with **Phi 2:10-11**.

<sup>64</sup> *Antiquity of the Jews* 11.1.1 regarding Isa 44:28.

## g.) Yahweh's confrontation with the Babylonian gods: chap. 46

**V. 1-7:** The nullity of the idols is illustrated by the Babylonian gods Bel and Nebo, who had to be carried by their worshippers. Bel (also called Marduk or Merodach), the god of the sun, was the main god (idol) of Babylon. Nebo was the god of wisdom and literature. The fall of Babylon revealed the impotence of these gods:

- They have to be manufactured: v. 6.
- They have to be carried: v. 1.
- They cannot move: v. 7a.
- They can neither hear, nor help: v. 7b.

Note the contrast between Bel and Nebo, which must be borne (vv. 1-2) and Yahweh, who not only does not have to be carried but also carries us (verse 4). Verse 4 is particularly suitable as an encouragement for older (or simply weak) people to place their hope entirely on God.

**Vv. 8-13:** Yahweh, in contrast to Bel and Nebo, is sovereign: what he said will be fulfilled (true prophecy), the final salvation of Zion, Israel, whom the Lord considers to be his "ornament" (verse 13).

## h.) The fall of Babylon: chap. 47

**Vv. 1-5:** Babylon is judged: Babylon was defeated by the Medo-Persian Cyrus in 539 BC, during the reign of Belshazzar (co-regent of his father Nabonidus). Compare Dan 5. The fall of Babylon see also Isa 13:17-22; 21:1-10; Jer 51:33-58. This is a so-called mocking song (a taunt) about Babylon as in 14:4ff. Here, in verse 1, Babylon is called "**Virgin Daughter Babel**" and "**Daughter of the Chaldeans**". She is to be destroyed because of her godlessness and sorcery. In verse 9 it says that she should become a **childless widow**. This contrasts with the future restoration of Israel. In chap. 54 the Lord announces the restoration and future glory of Israel. In verse 5, the Lord compares himself to a husband who takes his unfaithful wife back; the infertile should have children (v. 1). Babylon, on the other hand, is supposed to be barren and lonely.

**Vv. 6-15:** The Lord will take revenge on her (1) for her mercilessness towards the people of God (verse 6). God has given his people into the hands of the Babylonians because of their unfaithfulness, but that does not justify their brutality and ruthlessness. The Babylonians are reproached exactly the same as the Assyrians in Isa 10:5ff. 2) Because of her pride (vv. 7-8.10). (3) Because of their magic practices (vv. 12-15).

## i.) Yahweh's call to Israel: chap. 48

The people of Israel are addressed here again after the announcement of judgement over Babylon in chapter 47. Yahweh admonishes Israel four times to listen (vv. 1.12.14.16ff).

### (1) Call to repent: vv. 1-11

**Vv. 1-2:** Although the people call themselves "descendants of Jacob" and "Israel" and boast of their descent from Judah and purport to swear by the name of the Yahweh and pray to the God of Israel, the Lord says that all this is only lip service. The people are not acting with a sincere heart.

**Vv. 3-5:** Here the Lord declares why he announced these events to his people in advance. The purpose of the prophecy is that people will recognise that God alone is sovereign and he alone

knows and determines the future so that the people cannot say in retrospect that their idols brought this about (v. 5).

5 **Vv. 6-8:** The new things predicted here by the Lord likely refer to the deliverance of God's people from Babylonian exile through Cyrus. The Lord has prophesied it, so the people cannot say in retrospect: "Yes, I knew of them!" (v. 7)

10 **Vv. 9-11:** God is merciful to his people for his own honour's sake. He acts for his own name's sake: vv. 9.11. Compare this with Ezekiel's message: 36:23.26; 39:28. God wants to purify Israel, not destroy it (vv. 9-10), which is why he uses Cyrus for his purposes (v. 15) in order to free his people from Babylonian captivity (v. 20).

## (2) Call to acknowledge God's sovereignty: vv. 12-19

15 Vv. 12-13: Here as well, the Lord initially substantiates his sovereignty by stating that he is the creator of heaven and earth.

Vv. 14-16a: And he again insists that only he can predict the future: referring to the deliverance of his people from Babylonian captivity despite the fact that Cyrus is not named in person here.

20 V. 16b: "*And now the Sovereign LORD (Adonai Yahweh) has sent me, endowed with his Spirit*": Martin, MacDonald and Kidner believe that this is a reference to **the divine trinity**.<sup>65</sup> **Adonai Yahweh** would be God the Father. "**His Spirit**" (in Hebrew: "Rūkhō"), of course, refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. 11:2) and the pronoun "me" ("has sent ME") probably refers to the "Servant of Yahweh" or the Messiah who speaks in the first person in 49:1; 50:4 and 61:1.

25 Vv. 17-19: "...*If only you had paid attention to my commands...*" (v. 18): This verse summarises the positive consequences of heeding and obeying Yahweh! Obedience brings blessing!

## (3) Call to leave Babylon: vv. 20-22

30 The pronouncement by King Cyrus (cf. 2Ch 36:22-23 and Ezr 1:1-4) allowed the Jewish people to leave Babylon in order to reconstruct the temple in Jerusalem and serve Yahweh there. The fact that God's people are called on by the prophet (in anticipation of the event) to leave Babylon could be an indirect indication that a large part of the Jews would have preferred to remain in a foreign land when the prophecy was finally fulfilled 150 years later. Material consideration (business!) often played an important role in this regard. The call to leave Babylon also has an eschatological meaning since it can be found again in Rev 18:4: People are called on to leave the whore of Babylon, the "false church" (eschatologically false, syncretistic church or religion) before it is too late, and they are also judged. Those who do not listen to God's warning will be lost. Therefore, the conclusion in verse 22: "*There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked.*" This warning can be found again in 57:21 and, in a sense, represents a link between the second and third part of the Book of Isaiah. The Exodus motif appears again in verse 21. The people of God are to leave Babylon as they had once left Egypt.

## j.) Parenthesis: The monarchy of God

- ➔ "*I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God!*": 44:6; 45:18.21.22; 46:9; 48:12.

<sup>65</sup> Derek Kidner, op. cit., p. 616, says: "It is a remarkable glimpse, from afar, of the Trinity."

- ➔ ***“I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no saviour!”***: 43:11; 45:5-6.

### **(1) God is sovereign over Satan: chap. 14:3-24**

As mentioned above, we believe that Isa 14:13-14 refers to an attempted attack of Satan on the autocratic rule or monarchy of God. Compare Isa 42:8: *“...I will not yield my glory to another...”*

5 This word applies to all humans ever since the fall of the first humans (cf. Gen 3).

### **(2) God is sovereign over so-called “gods” (idols)**

Regarding this topic, see especially Isa 44 and 46. Bel and Nebo were the two main gods of Babylon:

- 10
- They had to be carried: 46:1.
  - They even had to be manufactured: 46:6!

15 The entire chapter 46 reveals their lack of power. Isa 44:9-22 emphasises the stupidity and uselessness of idolatry. Someone cuts down a tree; some of the wood is used to make fire and the rest is carved into an idol and becomes “his” god to whom he bows down! How senseless... and yet many people today essentially do the exact same thing.

- A warning to Israel not to turn away from Yahweh and practice idolatry. Therefore, Isaiah uncovers and emphasises the idiocy of idolatry (cf. 44:13-23)!

### **20 (3) God is sovereign over the nations**

#### *(a) Assyria*

25 Isa 7:20: Assyria is a ➔ ***“hired razor”*** in the hand of Yahweh. In Isa 10:5-15, the Lord uses the armies of Assyria as his ➔ ***“rod of anger”***. God avails himself of Israel’s enemy to judge his people and other nations. Verses 12-15 also state that Assyria will be judged subsequently due to its pride.

#### *(b) Babylon*

30 39:6-7: God uses Isaiah to tell King Hezekiah that the day will come when Babylon will lead Israel (i.e. Judah) into captivity. In Isa 13:17-19, God declares that he will also judge Babylon (after using Babylon to execute his judgements). God will use the Medo-Persian Cyrus to judge Babylon (cf. Isa 44:28; 45:1).

#### *(c) Persia*

44:28–45:5: God will use the Medo-Persian (Cyrus) to bring Israel back to its homeland.

#### *(d) All nations*

35 All nations will be ultimately judged: cf. 63:1-6. God avails himself of the nations to bring back the Israelites to their homeland (14:1-2).

### **(4) God is sovereign over Sennacherib: chap. 36–37**

During his lifetime, the Assyrian King Sennacherib conquered all other great regional powers. He also laid siege to Jerusalem and sent his field commander to Jerusalem. He lists seven reasons why it would be futile for Judah (Jerusalem) to resist the Assyrian army:

- 5 1. *"You are leaning on a splintered staff (referring to Egypt)": 36:6.*
2. He wants to convince the Jews that they are relying on a God whose altars Hezekiah had previously removed: v. 7 (which, of course, was not true; Hezekiah had merely destroyed the high places of idolatrous worship).
3. *"You would not have enough riders even if I gave you 2000 horses": v. 8.*
- 10 4. *"Your God has sent me to attack you": v. 10.*
5. *"Hezekiah deceives you by calling on you to trust Yahweh": v. 15.*
6. *"Surrender and make peace with us and you will have in abundance": vv. 16-17.*
7. *"Other nations could not save themselves from the Assyrians. Therefore, Yahweh also cannot save Jerusalem from the Assyrian army": vv. 18-20!*

15 **37:15-20:** Hezekiah turns to Yahweh in prayer. He tells the Lord that Assyria has conquered all other nations and pleads with God to intervene on Jerusalem's behalf so that HIS name may be glorified.

20 **37:21-35:** Speaking through Isaiah, God announces the destruction of Assyria for HIS sake.

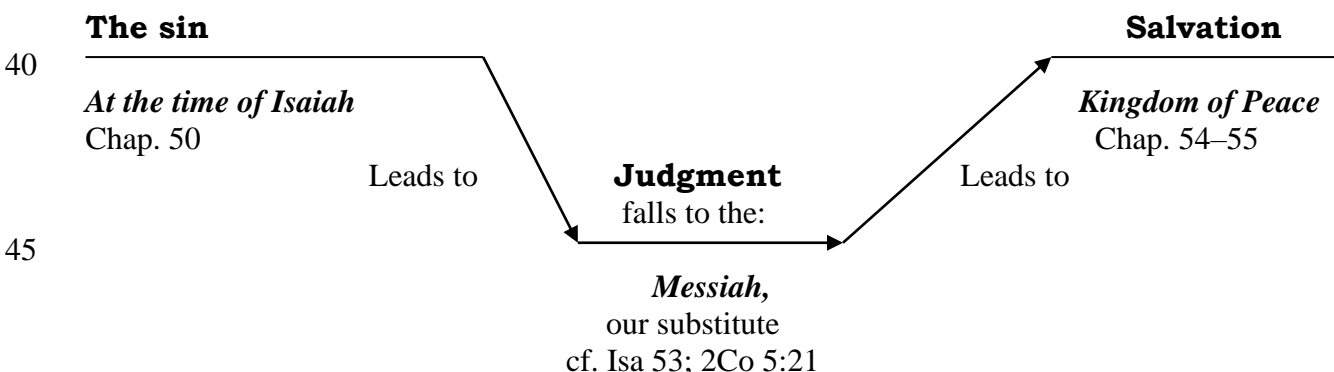
**37:36-38:** Yahweh's victory over Assyria. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers die in one night!

### Practical applications for my own life from studying the sovereignty of God:

- 25
1. **Comfort:**
    - God can defeat even our most dangerous enemies.
    - God has a solution at hand even when everything seems hopeless from our point of view: cf. Rom 4:18; Exo 14 (Israel is surrounded in the desert!).
  - 30 2. **Exhortation:**
    - God has the sole claim on my life since he is the only sovereign God (cf. 1Co 6:19-20).
    - Glory is due to him alone: cf. Isa 42:8.

## **2. Redemption through Yahweh's servant, the Messiah: chap. 49–55**

35 In this passage, Isaiah talks about the sins of the people. It is not so much about the near future, but rather about the Messiah's redemptive work (Yahweh's servant). This part of the book provides more details about the Messiah than any other text in the Old Testament.



## a.) Yahweh's servant and salvation (2<sup>nd</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 49

### (1) Yahweh's Servant (i.e. the Messiah) and his ministry: vv. 1-13

- He was called even before he was born: v. 1.
- He has the gift for preaching: v. 2.
- 5 • The *"servant of Israel"* must refer to the Messiah because what was said about him would not apply to any other person (v. 6: quoted in Act 13:47).
- His lament about the apparent futility of his service reveals the humanness of Yahweh's servant (v. 4).
- 10 • He will bring Jacob back, i.e. Israel (v. 5), and be the light of the world (v. 6). These two verses prove that *"Yahweh's servant"* in this chapter in the Book of Isaiah does not represent the people of Israel since the passage clearly states that he will save and bring back the *"servant Jacob"*. The passage offers a key argument against those Jews who dispute the messiahship of Jesus and claim that the *"suffering servant"* in Isa 40–55 refers to the people of Israel. Isaiah differentiates very clearly between *"Yahweh's servant"* (i.e. the Messiah) and the *"servant Jacob"* (i.e. Israel).
- 15 • He brings salvation to Israel and to the gentiles (i.e. the whole world): v. 6.
- He is the mediator for the covenant with God: v. 8 (as in 42:6).
- He frees his captive people and brings them home from all nations (vv. 9-13).

### (2) Encouragement for Israel: vv. 14-26

- 20 • God has not forgotten his people but has engraved them on the palms of his hands. This is elucidated with the image of a mother who does not forget her child. Interestingly, God adds that even if a mother were to forget her child, he would never forget his people (vv. 14-18). *"Your walls are ever before me"* (v. 16): Perhaps in reference to the prospective fall of Jerusalem's walls at the hands of the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC?
- 25 • He wants to bless his people and lead them back to the land of Israel: vv. 19-22 (v. 22 cf. with 14:1-3).
- The nations that have not been destroyed are to serve Israel: v. 23.
- Israel's enemies are to be destroyed: vv. 24-26.

## b.) Israel's captivity and Yahweh's obedient servant (3<sup>rd</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 50

30

### (1) The illustration of the certificate of divorce: vv. 1-3

- Israel's lamentable circumstances cannot be ascribed to the will or an apparent weakness of Yahweh (see the listed images: *"certificate of divorce"* and *"sale to creditors"*: v. 1), but rather solely to the sins of the people. Yahweh's might and power are illustrated through his deeds and sovereignty over nature: vv. 2b-3.

35

### (2) Obedience and faithfulness of Yahweh's Servant (the Messiah): vv. 4-9

Yahweh's servant (the Messiah):

- Listens and passes on Yahweh's instructions: vv. 4-5 (cf. Joh 17:9).
- He suffers by his own choice: v. 6. Note also the following contrast between the Messiah and the people of Israel: Yahweh's servant (the Messiah) is beaten on his back because he was prepared to suffer for the people of Israel while Israel is beaten on its back because of its own sin. (51:23)
- Yet, Yahweh will grant him the victory: vv. 7-9. The Servant of the Lord asks defiantly: "*Who then will bring charges against me?*" Compare with the "legal dispute" in 1:18; 41:1; 43:26.

### (3) Call to listen to the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah: vv. 10-11

- Trust him (the Messiah): v. 10.
- Otherwise only judgment remains: v. 11. This is a reference to eternal judgment, eternal damnation. The sentence is a link to the end of the book, i.e. to 66:24, which also talks about the unquenchable fire. Jesus indirectly quotes this word again in Mar 9:48. Compare with Rev 14:9-11 and 20:14-15.

## c.) Yahweh's righteousness and salvation: chap. 51

Yahweh urges his people Israel multiple times to listen to him: vv. 1.2.4.6.7.17.21. God reminds Israel of his help in the past:

### (1) God's actions in the past as proof of his faithfulness: vv. 1-3

The Lord assures his own of his faithfulness by referencing their descent from Abraham (vv. 1-2). God promised Abraham several times to make him into a great nation (cf. Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:5; 22:17). God's people should know that he will never break his covenant with Abraham even during the dire times of the Babylonian exile. God can free his own from a seemingly hopeless situation as he had previously freed Israel from Egypt (see below vv. 9-10). In fact, he even has the power to turn their land into Eden (paradise) (v. 3).

### (2) The faithful ones will be saved: vv. 4-8

The Lord will achieve his goal and redeem his people. His faithful ones will place their hope in him as well as people from other nations (vv. 4b, 5b). God will judge the nations in order to save his people (vv. 5a, 7b-8). The descriptions of this judgement fit the descriptions of judgements that will come over the earth during the Great Tribulation (see Rev 6; 8; 16). Righteousness must first be established by judging the unrighteous so that his people can live in peace and righteousness. And this is precisely what is promised in Isa 11:3ff. The Messiah will bring justice to the poor by striking the unjust, the tyrants with **his iron rod**. Compare this with Rev 19:15 where it says that Christ, upon his return, will carry a sword and iron sceptre with which he will "strike down" the nations.

### (3) The prayer of the faithful ones for God's intervention: vv. 9-16

**Vv. 9-10:** The faithful ones among the people plead with God by reminding him of his miracles at the time of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. "Rahab" is a symbol for Egypt: cf. Psalms 89:11.



**Vv. 11-15:** God answers their prayers by proclaiming through the prophet the return of his people to their native land (v. 11). In v. 12, the Lord encourages his own to not be afraid of people since human beings are fleeting. Rather his people should trust him, the creator of heaven and earth since  
 5 he is able to deal with the enemies of his people (vv. 13-15). The Exodus motif shines through again in verse 15 (as already in v. 10).

V. 16: *"I have put my words in your mouth"*: Israel has more or less completely failed in its role as a witness to other nations. Paul lists the privileges of Israel in Rom 9:1-5. However, God punished  
 10 the people of Israel with exile because they turned away from Yahweh (722 BC Assyrian exile, 605 BC Babylonian exile and worldwide exile by the Romans in 70 AD). Since Pentecost it is the Church of Jesus that is bringing the Word of God to all peoples. Isa 66:19 possibly indicates that Israel will finally perform this missionary role in the Messianic Kingdom. Together with MacDonald and Motyer, I believe that this passage refers to the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah;  
 15 he is the one in whose mouth the Father has placed these words (cf. Isa 49:1-4; 49:2; 50:4; see also Joh 17:8.14). The New Testament clearly states that Jesus Christ is the creator of the universe: cf. Joh 1:3.10; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2.

#### **(4) God ends the judgement of his people: vv. 17-23**

God ends Israel's judgment (vv. 17-22). Now he will judge Israel's oppressor (v. 23; see already in  
 20 vv. 12-15). The staggering cup (v. 22) is a metaphor for judgement. Whoever drinks it will fall. Compare Rev 16:19; 18:6).

### **d.) Salvation for Zion: chap. 52:1-12**

#### **(1) Call to Jerusalem to prepare for the approaching salvation: vv. 1-2**

God's people were figuratively naked in exile, but now they will be delivered by the Lord.  
 25 Especially verse 2 makes it clear that this is to be understood as an indication of impending deliverance from Babylonian exile. The people are to shake off the dust and rise up since they were oppressed in exile. Yet now they can arise and are called on to put on festive garments of splendour.

#### **(2) God substantiates the deliverance of his people: vv. 3-6**

1. The oppressors did not pay a price for Israel. God, therefore, does not have to buy Israel back for a monetary amount (ransom): V. 3 (for free, at no charge: cf. 45:13; 55:1).
2. God freed Israel in the past (from the Egyptians and Assyrians; here again we find the Exodus motif): v. 4.
3. Israel's oppressors (Babylonians) did not honour Yahweh: v. 5.
4. Israel will acknowledge Yahweh because of its deliverance: v. 6.

#### **35 (3) Praise of Israel's purchased rest for their salvation: vv. 7-10**

V. 7a *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace..."*: Paul quotes this passage in Rom 10:15 in connection with the missionary command to spread the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Vv. 7b-10: This announcement of deliverance was initially fulfilled when the Jewish people returned to its native land on account of Cyrus'

pronouncement and was permitted to begin with the reconstruction of the temple. These words will be fully and ultimately fulfilled when the Lord returns and reigns as king on Zion (cf. Isa 2:3; 11:2ff; 24:23; Zec 14:9ff).

#### (4) Call to leave Babylon: vv. 11-12

5 As before (in Isa 48:20), God's people are called to "go out from there". This, of course, refers to Babylon (cf. Isa 51:6 and Rev 18:4). The command to "*touch no unclean thing*" is reminiscent of the story of Achan who secretly tried to "steel" from the loot of fallen Jericho, which violated God's command (cf. Jos 6:18 to 7:26). In the New Testament, Paul quotes these words from 2Ki 6:17 as a warning against compromising with unbelievers.

#### 10 e.) The substitutional suffering and victory of Yahweh's servant (4<sup>th</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 52:13–53:12

The precise description of the Messiah's redemptive work is unique in this passage. The substitutional suffering of the Messiah is described here in greater detail than anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is not easy to interpret this text since it includes 26 expressions that occur  
15 nowhere else<sup>66</sup> in the Old Testament. One can divide this passage into *five stanzas with three verses each*: The structure is also concentric and contrastive: in regard to concentricity: The passage begins with the glory of Yahweh's servant (A) and ends with his victory (A<sup>1</sup>). The second passage talks about being treated contemptuously by the people (B) and, as a supplement (B<sup>2</sup>), his death. Verses 4-6 (C) are the central passage that point to his substitutional suffering. In regard to the  
20 contrastive structure, contempt (B) is contrasted with glory (A) and death (B<sup>1</sup>) with victory (A<sup>1</sup>):

A Glory

B Contempt

25 C Suffering

B<sup>1</sup> Death

30 A<sup>1</sup> Victory

#### (1) His glory: 52:13-15

The prophet begins with the future glory of Yahweh's servant; he then refers to his humiliation (contrastively) and the reaction of the people (nations) on account of his disfiguration.

#### (2) His contemptuous treatment: 53:1-3

35 The people despise him on account of his origin and disfiguration (this undoubtedly refers to his suffering on the cross!).

#### (3) His suffering: 53:4-6

<sup>66</sup> This is referred to as "*hapax legomenon*".

His substitutional suffering is repeated seven times (seven lines) in these verses.

#### (4) His death: 53:7-9

Since he was innocent (without sin: cf. 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15), his death was a substitutional atoning sacrifice.

- V. 8: quoted in Act 8:32-33.
- V. 9: quoted in 1Pe 2:22.

#### (5) His victory: 53:10-12

It was God's will for him to endure suffering because his death was to be sacrificial (v. 10). Verses 10-11 clearly indicate that he gave up his life by his own choice (cf. Joh 10:18). However, his death was not the final chapter as it says here: → ***"he will see his offspring and prolong his days..."*** This clearly refers to his resurrection. The Messiah will be victorious by justifying many people (vv. 10b.11b.12b). His descendants, whom he will see, are those that believe in him and are saved through him.

### f.) Parenthesis: The Messiah

About 60 verses in the Book of Isaiah refer to the Messiah, which clearly constitutes a prophetic miracle. The study of the Book of Isaiah should cause us to worship God since the text tells us who Jesus is and what he has done for us!

#### (1) The names for the Messiah in the Book of Isaiah

- **4:2:** ***"Branch of the Lord"*** (cf. Jer 23:5; 33:15).
- **7:14:** ***"Emmanuel"*** or better ***"Immanuel" (God with us)*** (cf. Isa 8:10; Mat 1:23).
- **8:14:** ***"Holy place"*** (in the sense of *protection, grace and peace* (cf. Joh 2:18-22; Mat 26:59-62; cf. Mat 24:1-2) and ***"A stone that causes people to stumble"*** (cf. 1Pe 2:7-8).
- **9:5-6:** ***"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"***.
- **28:16:** ***"Cornerstone"*** (cf. Mat 16:18).
- **42:1:** ***"Yahweh's servant"*** (cf. Act 3:13).
- **49:6:** ***"A light for revelation to the Gentiles"*** (Luk 2:32).

#### (2) His origin

- **11:1.10:** From the family of Jesse (father of David)

#### (3) His birth

- **7:14:** Virgin birth (cf. Mat 1:23; Luk 1:31-38).

#### (4) His qualifications

- **11:2:** *“The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh’s] will rest on him”* (cf. Joh 1:32-33; 3:34).
- **42:1:** *“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight”* (cf. Mat 3:17; Mat 12:18-21).
- **49:5:** *“Formed in the womb”* (cf. Luk 1:35).
- 5 • **50:4-5:** *“well-instructed tongue and an open ear”*: cf. Joh 17:8: *“For I gave them the words you gave me”* (cf. Joh 17:16). Joh 8:28: *“I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence”* (cf. Joh 8:38; 12:49; 14:10.24).
- **50:6-7:** Yahweh helped him in his suffering: cf. Luk 22:43: An angel attended to him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

10

Isaiah describes the Messiah as a human being, someone who receives help from God (i.e. his Father) throughout his ministry.

### **(5) His service (during his first coming: his incarnation)**

- **9:2:** A light has dawned in Galilee: cf. Mat 4:14-15.
- 15 • **35:5-6:** The eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf will be opened; the lame will jump and the mute will speak: cf. Mat 11:5 (Mat 4:24).
- **40:1-4:** His predecessor: John the Baptist. This passage is quoted in all four gospels as *“a [the] voice of one calling in the wilderness”*.
- 20 • **61:1.2a:** He will heal, proclaim freedom for the captives and the year of the Lord’s favour: cf. Luk 4:18-19.

Jesus’ ministry should actually have been the beginning of his reign; instead it marked the beginning of the age of the Church. The nation of Israel was temporarily “set aside” since his people (with the exception of a few as e.g. his disciples) rejected him (see Mat 13 and Rom 11:11-16.25ff; cf. Act 1:6).

25

### **(6) His suffering**

- **50:6-7:** His voluntary suffering: cf. Joh 10:17-18; 18:6.10.12.
- **53:4-7:** He suffered willingly as a substitute for others: cf. 2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24.

### **(7) His death**

- 30 • **53:8:** *“For he was cut off from the land of the living”* (cf. Dan 9:26).

### **(8) His resurrection**

- **53:10:** *“He will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.”* Therefore also Joh 14:19: *“Because I live, you also will live.”* (cf. 1Co 15:22).
- 35 • **25:8:** *“He [Yahweh] will swallow up death forever...”* (cf. 1Co 15:54).
- **26:19:** *“But your dead will live . . . your dew is like a dew of lights and you will let it fall on the earth of the shades”* (cf. Dan 12:2).

## g.) Israel's restoration: chap. 54

What is the connection between chap. 53 and chap. 54? As already mentioned, chapter 53 looks ahead to the suffering and substitutional death as well as to the resurrection and reign of the Messiah. His suffering and death are tragic events, but those who believe in him can rejoice because he will come to life again, have descendants and rule. The restoration of his people and his coming kingdom are announced in chapter 54. The following pattern emerges:

**Vv. 1-6:** Acceptance and forgiveness

**Vv. 7-10:** Punishment and pardon

**Vv. 11-17:** Final restoration

### (1) God accepts Israel as an abandoned woman is accepted again by her husband: vv. 1-6

**Vv. 1-3:** Israel was held captive like a barren, childless and abandoned woman. Now her husband (i.e. God) accepts her again with everlasting love. Israel is to be restored and its borders expanded so that there is enough space for those who have been saved. **Vv. 4-6:** Israel does not have to be ashamed anymore on account of past sins since God (V. 5: *"the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer"*) has forgiven Israel as a husband forgives an unfaithful and repentant wife and takes her to himself again. This image of "accepting the abandoned wife" appears again in 62:4-6, which talks about the restoration of Jerusalem. This is another example of how the second part of the Book of Isaiah is connected with the third part (thematically and stylistically).

### (2) Israel is permanently restored after punishment: vv. 7-10

**V. 7:** *"For a brief moment I abandoned you"*: God exiled the people on account of rebellion and sin. This can be said for the Assyrian exile (722 BC) of the Northern Kingdom as well as for the Babylonian exile (from 605 BC) of Judah. However, the Lord will accept his people again after this abandonment, i.e. after the time of punishment through exile. As already shown above, Isaiah says the same in his Apocalypse (chap. 24–27): First punishment by exile and only then restoration: see Isa 27: v. 6: Israel's restoration; it yields much fruit. **Vv. 7-11:** However, the people must first be punished and abandoned. The east wind alludes to Babylon, i.e. the exile. **Vv. 12-13:** The Lord will gather Israel again after the punishment and bring them back to Jerusalem. **Vv. 8-10:** The final acceptance and restoration of his people is substantiated with the example of his covenant with Noah (Flood motif).

### (3) The beauty of restored Israel: vv. 11-17

**Vv. 11-12:** Restored Israel is compared to a glorious city, similar to the New Jerusalem in Rev 21:9ff. In Hebrew, the *"afflicted"* and *"not comforted"* in verse 11 are an adjective and a verb in the feminine form. In Semitic culture, cities are often referred to as a woman or bride. The foundation walls of the city are to be raised up again, which could allude to the walls of Jerusalem that were torn down by the Babylonians. **Vv. 13-14:** Even the children and youths will belong to the Lord, and there will no longer be any cause for fear. Why? **Vv. 15-17:** Because the Lord protects his people and grants victory over their enemies. V. 15: *"If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing"*: Compare this with Isa 27:4-5 (in Isaiah's Apocalypse, which is also about the Lord's protection of Israel during the Messianic Kingdom).

## h.) The offer of mercy to the whole world: chap. 55

### (1) Call to accept the offer of mercy: vv. 1-3

The invitation → *“Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost”* in verse 1 is a metaphor for God’s offer of salvation to all who are hungry and thirsty, free of charge and at no cost, i.e. by grace. This invitation is echoed again in the last chapter of the Bible in the invitation in Rev 22:17. Compare this “buying without money” with Isa 45:13: Deliverance through Cyrus without a purchase price! Verse 3: As already mentioned above, the *“everlasting covenant”* is mentioned in each of the three parts of the Book of Isaiah: in 24:5, here in 55:3 and in 61:8. See 2Sa 7:11-16 in regard to God’s eternal covenant with David. God continues to stand by this covenant despite the serious sins committed by David later on (cf. 2Sa 11).

### (2) The offer of grace also applies to the (gentile) nations: vv. 4-7

**V. 4:** *“See, I have made **him** a witness to the peoples”*: David had probably become famous among the neighbouring nations and beyond, but *“him”* in this instance most likely refers to the Messiah, the Son of David. For Jesus’ descent from the line of David, see already Isa 11:1; cf. Rom 1:3 and 15:12. The mention of David here can be associated with 7:14 and the Servant of Yahweh in 42:1ff and 49:3-6. The Messiah will also draw other peoples to himself or offer them salvation because he is to be a *“light for the Gentiles”* (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; 62:1).

**V. 5:** *“Surely **you** will summon nations”*: The pronoun “you” probably refers to Israel to which many nations will run in order to worship the Messiah.<sup>67</sup>

**Vv. 6-7:** Grace is offered to all people, both Jews and gentiles. Anyone who is looking for salvation. Godless people are also called to repent of their ways and turn to the Lord since he is the God of forgiveness. Compare with 1Ki 8:41-43; Act 13:46-48; 28:28; Rom 5:6-10.

### (3) The certainty of the fulfilment of God’s promises: Vv. 8-13

**Vv. 8-9:** His infinite mercy is proof that his ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts. This could be an indication that a person seeking salvation can only receive it through the grace and mercy of God, and not on account of his works.

**Vv. 10-11:** The impact of the Word of God is certain, just as the laws of nature: His Word will bear fruit and will not return empty.

**Vv. 12-13:** A metaphor for the Millennium? Verse 13 is perhaps an allusion to Gen 3:18 and Rom 8:19-23. (There will no longer be thorn-bushes and briers!)

## C. Exaltation through repentance: chap. 56–66

As already indicated in the introduction, many critical exegetes attribute these chapters to an anonymous author referred to as “Trito-Isaiah”. However, if these chapters are not Isaiahic but

<sup>67</sup> As for example John A. Martin, op. cit., III, p. 113.

rather “post-exilic”, then the reader would no longer find an accusation of idol worship here, but rather a denunciation of mixed marriages etc., as in Ezra and Nehemiah.

## 1. Sin and the call to repentance: chap. 56–59

### a.) Salvation is offered to all: chap. 56:1-8

5 **56:1-8:** The offer of grace is proclaimed as → *“my salvation is close at hand”*. It is addressed to all, even the so-called “disadvantaged”:

- Foreigners: (v. 3).
- Eunuchs (v. 4).
- 10 • These can also receive eternal life (v. 5; cf. Rom 2:11).
- V. 7 quoted by Jesus in Mat 21:13; Mar 11:17; Luk 19:46.

### b.) Idolatry and the sin of Israel: chap. 56:9–57:21

From 56:9 on, the prophet again addresses the sin of the people:

- 15 • He exposes the leaders of the people as *“blind watchmen”*: 56:9-12.
- The people are evil and idolatrous: 57:1-13:
  1. The righteous suffer injustice: 57:1-2
  2. The Israelites are sorcerers, adulterers and liars: 57:3-4.
  - 20 3. They sacrifice under trees (even child sacrifices; cf. with peoples like Moab who offered to the god Molech or with Incas and Aztecs in Southern and Central America) and prostitute themselves: 57:5-6.
  4. They sacrifice on the high and lofty hills: 57:7.
  5. Israel compromises itself with everyone, relying on Assyria rather than trusting in the Lord (Ahaz sent messengers to the King of Assyria and even set up an altar in the temple of
  - 25 Jerusalem that resembled the Assyrian idol altar while setting Yahweh’s alter aside, cf. 2Ki 16:7-18): 57:8-12 (57:11: *“nor taken this to heart”* cf. with 42:25).
  6. Therefore, judgment over Israel is certain: 57:13a.
  - Those who are humble will be saved: 57:13b-19
  - But there is no salvation for the wicked: 57:20-21. (V. 21 *“There is no peace for the wicked”*
  - 30 cf. 48:22)

The topics in chapters 58–66 are almost as varied as those in the rest of the Book of Isaiah. The constant alternation between sin/judgement, on the one hand, and peace on the other is apparent. The following overall pattern applies:

35 The Great  
58←Sin→59/60←Kingdom→62/63←Tribulation→65:16/65:17←Kingdom→65:25/66:1←Résumé→66:24

### c.) Sin and righteousness: chap. 58–59

- 40 **(1) False worship or Sabbath practices: 58:1-5**

Israel's sin becomes apparent in its worship. Though the people fast and practise self-chastisement, they persist in their unrighteousness. Compare this with the hypocritical fasting and confession during carnival. People "repent" outwardly and even confess to a priest while planning to commit the same sin again the next day.

## (2) True worship or Sabbath practices: 58:6-14

**Vv. 6-7:** True, authentic fasting leads to turning away from unrighteousness and thus to self-renunciation for the benefit of the poor.

10 **Vv. 8-12:** The Lord blesses social justice.

**Vv. 13-14:** The Lord blesses the sincere observance of the Sabbath. The expression "*for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken*", cf. also in 1:20 and 40:5.

## (3) Sin separates from Yahweh: 59:1-8

15 The reason for the separation of Israel from God is not Yahweh's inability, but Israel's sin. The passage 59:2 is a key verse in Hamartiology (study of sin) and Soteriology (study of salvation).

## (4) Israel is aware of its guilt: 59:9-15

20 While confessing to God, Isaiah identifies himself with his people as Daniel did later on in his prayer of repentance (Dan 9). In the end, Isaiah mentions the most scandalous sin, namely that those who resist evil become a victim of the unrighteous. Isaiah then says that the Lord sees all this and is displeased (v. 15).

## (5) Yahweh intervenes since no intermediary can be found: 59:16-21

25 **V. 16-17:** For this complaint that there is **no one to intervene** for the sinful people, see also 63:5 and Eze 22:30. God himself intervenes as the saviour since there is no one else. "*So his own arm achieved salvation for him*": The anthropomorphism of the "*arm of Yahweh*" appears several times in Isaiah. **Verse 17: cf. with Paul's spiritual armour in Eph 6:14.17.**

**Vv. 18-21:** How will the Lord do this?

1. By judging those who are evil (v. 18).
2. By saving those who confess their sins (vv. 19-21). This will be fulfilled at the time of Christ's return. Paul quotes verses 20-21 in **Rom 11:26-27** and says that the eschatological conversion and restoration of Israel will coincide with the return of Christ. This will be the "Pentecost" of Israel as a nation. In our view, this passage talks about the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

## 35 d.) Parenthesis: sin in chapter 59

### (1) The extent of the sin

**V. 3:** Injustice, murder, lies, mocking.



- V. 4:** Corruption.  
**Vv. 6-7:** Murder, inclination towards evil, destruction.  
**V. 13:** Treachery, hypocrisy.  
**V. 15:** Those who turn away from sin are oppressed (cf. 1Pe 4:4)!

## 5 (2) Consequences of sin (cf. Gal 6:7)

- V. 2:** Separation from God.  
**V. 5:** Death.  
**V. 8:** No peace.  
**V. 9:** No redemption, no salvation.  
10 **Vv. 10-11:** Darkness; salvation is far away.  
**Vv. 14-15:** No truth and those who hold to the truth are oppressed.  
**V. 18:** God's retribution (judgment)!

## (3) Salvation from sin

- V. 1:** The arm of the Lord is not too short to save.  
15 **Vv. 16-20:** A redeemer will come from Zion (cf. Zec 13:1).

## (4) The necessity for a redeemer

- Humankind cannot save itself: v. 16 (cf. Psa 49:8ff). There is no one to step into the breach (cf. Eze 22:20; cf. 1Ti 2:5).
- Because God will reward everyone according to their deeds (all are lost without a redeemer since all humans are sinners: cf. Rom 3:23-24).
- Jesus, the Redeemer, will come to save: v. 20.

# 2. Yahweh and his reign in Jerusalem: chap. 60–62

## a.) The Kingdom of Peace

The Kingdom of Peace is described as follows:

- 25
- The position of the (gentile) nations: chapter 60.
  - The Messiah: chapter 61.
  - Jerusalem: chapter 62.

30 In the Kingdom of Peace:

## b.) The Messiah

- He will be merciful, but also judge: 61:1-2.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, Jesus quotes this passage in the synagogue of Nazareth in Luk 4:18-19. But he does not read the last part of Isa 61:2! He pauses in the middle of the sentence. Why? In our view, this also points to a *Messianic intermediary kingdom* (Millennium): The grace is for the age of the church; judgment, however, only begins with the Great Tribulation, which ends with the return of Christ and enters into the millennial kingdom.

- He will be Jerusalem's light: 60:19-20. This prophecy will be ultimately fulfilled in eternity (New Creation: cf. Rev 21:23). Here as well, the prophet, in a sense, sees the Millennium and eternity through a telescope in one, as in 65:17-25.

### c.) Jerusalem

- 5 • Will be the city of Yahweh: 60:14.
- Will bear a new name: 62:12 (cf. Eze 48:35).
- Will be rebuilt and glorious: 62:7.

### d.) Israel

- 10 • Will be the light for the gentiles: 60:3.
- All will be righteous: 60:21.
- All will be priests of the Lord: 61:6.
- Will be called "*the Holy People*" and "*the Redeemed of the Lord*": 62:12.

### e.) The nations

- 15 • Will come to Jerusalem and bring the Jews home: 60:3-4 (cf. Isa 14:1-2; Zec 14:16ff).
- They will praise Yahweh: 60:6.
- They will rebuild the walls of Jerusalem: 60:10.
- Those who do not serve Israel will be annihilated: 60:12 (cf. Zec 14:16-20).
- They will serve Jerusalem: 60:16; 61:6.

### f.) The temple

- 20 Isa 63:18 and 64:11 address Solomon's temple, which was destroyed approximately 120 years later (in 586 BC) by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. However, there will be a new temple in the Messianic Kingdom, which

- Will be glorious: 60:7.13-14.
- 25 • Will be an altar: 60:7; 62:9.

- 30 **g.) An eternal covenant** In the Messianic Kingdom, the Lord will enter into an everlasting covenant (**Isa 61:8**) with the people of Israel (i.e. with the rest of Israel who survived the Great Tribulation; cf. Rom 11:25-27), which the people had violated (**Isa 24:5**), resulting in the coming judgement, namely the time of the Great Tribulation (Isa 24:1ff). People can already enter into this eternal covenant with God today without cost (**Isa 55:1**) by accepting Jesus Christ's work of salvation (Isa 53:10-12). As already mentioned in the introduction, the expression "everlasting covenant" appears once in each of the three parts of the Book of Isaiah: 24:5; 55:3; 61:8.

## 3. Judgment of the godless: chap. 63:1 to 65:16

### a.) The judgement of Edom or the world: 63:1-6

- 35 Edom and Bozra in verse 1 compare with Moab in Isa 25: 10-12. As already mentioned above, these nations, which were hostile to Israel at the time of their exodus from Egypt or before they entered the Promised Land, are symbolic of all nations hostile to the People of God. The day of

vengeance is depicted in detail in **verses 1-4**. This is the time described by Jesus in Mat 24:21 and John in Rev 7:14 as the “Great Tribulation” or “Great Distress”. The Messiah will fight against the nations in order to save his people. Joe 3 (some translations Joe 4); Zec 14:1ff and Rev 19:11-21 are parallel verses. All these passages deal with the battle known as “*Armageddon*” in Rev 16:16. →  
 5 “*The winepress*” in 63:2-3; cf. with Rev 14:19-20. Compare verse 4 (day of vengeance) with Isa 61:2.

**Vv. 5-6:** “There was no one to help...” cf. Isa 59:16 and Eze 22:30.

### **b.) Prayer for forgiveness and mercy: 63:7-19**

- 10 In 63:7 to 64:11 the people of God pray. These people are most likely the remnant, the faithful rest (cf. 59:9-15) who have recognised their sin. In their prayer, the remnant remembers how the Lord has helped them in the past, particularly during the exodus out of Egypt (63:7-19). 63:9 undoubtedly refers to Yahweh, even Jesus.

### **c.) Prayer for intervention and confession of sin: 64:1-12**

- 15 **Vv. 1-4:** They plead with God to demonstrate his power and intervene supernaturally and confuse their enemies.

**Vv. 5-6:** They confess their sins again. Compare verse 6 with 53:6 (“*We all, like sheep, have gone astray...*”)

- 20 **Vv. 7-12:** They again ask for forgiveness and restoration. No forgiveness and restoration without repentance (cf. Pro 28:13).

### **d.) God’s response: 65:1-16**

- 25 God knows that there are some among the gentiles and in Israel who are seeking after God, and he promises his servants (the expression “my servants” occurs 7 times in these 16 verses: cf. vv. 8.9.13 [3 times].14) that he will be merciful to them. However, the idolaters in Israel will be judged. Paul quotes Isa 65:1-2 in Rom 10:20-22 to show that the nations who did not search after God are the ones who will find him. Israel, however, failed to do so as it persisted in its faithless and wicked ways. V. 16: “*One true God*” or “*God of truth*” (Elohim Amen) cf. Rev 3:7.14 where Jesus is referred to as “*holy and true*” or “*the Amen*”.
- 30

## **4. The future glory of the righteous ones and eternal punishment of the godless: chap. 65:17–66:24**

### **a.) Millennium and New Creation: 65:17-25**

- 35 Entrance into the kingdom of God is proof of God’s mercy. 65:17 undoubtedly refers to eternity, the New Creation: “*new heaven*” and “*new earth*” cf. 2Pe 3:13-14 and Rev 21:1ff: thus, **after** the Millennial Kingdom. However, this passage shows that Isaiah does not really distinguish between eternity and the Millennium, which was only revealed later to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos (see Revelation of John chap. 20:1–22:5). Especially verses 20 and 23 clearly show that, from verse 18 on, Isaiah is no longer referring to the eternal state, but rather to the Millennial Kingdom because  
 40 death still exists at this time, which will not be the case in eternity (cf. Rev 21:3-4). One could say that the Millennium provides a glimpse into eternity. Further indications of an “intermediary

kingdom” become apparent if one reads the passage attentively: 65:17 the Hebrew word “**khadash**” (שִׁדְרָה = new) accompanies both “**heaven**” and “**earth**”, but it is missing when referring to “**Jerusalem**” in 65:18-19. One could conclude that the passage does not yet refer to the heavenly (eternal) Jerusalem, but to the restored Jerusalem during the Messianic reign. In fact, in Rev 21:1-4, a passage that most definitely refers to eternity, the word “**new**” (Greek: καινός [kainós]) is used not only for “heaven” and “earth”, but also for “Jerusalem” as a city coming down from heaven to earth. Here in Isa 65:18ff, the text is still talking about an earthly, albeit a restored, Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom. People can still die during this time. The Millennial Kingdom is described as follows in this passage:

- Never-ending rejoicing: v. 18.
- No more weeping and crying: v. 19.
- Long life: Only very old people and sinners die. A 100-year-old person who passes away will be regarded as young: v. 20.
- Children will live there; thus, procreation will continue unlike in the eternal state: v. 23 (cf. Eze 47:22; Mat 22:30).
- Everyone will live in his own house; work will produce fruit: vv. 21-22 (cf. Gen 3:17-19).
- Communion with God; prayers are answered: v. 24.
- Peace amongst humans and animals and even amongst various animal species: v. 25a (cf. Isa 11:6-8).
- No more injustice: v. 25b.

## b.) Parenthesis: The day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation

### (1) The day of the Lord (Yahweh)

*The day of the Lord* includes the Great Tribulation and will last until the end of the Millennium. The day of the Lord is mentioned, among other places, in Isa 2:12. The context clearly indicates that this refers to the time of the Great Tribulation. In 2Pe 3:10, the day of the Lord lasts until the elements of the universe are destroyed and dissolved in fire, i.e. until the end of *this* earth, the end of the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>69</sup>

### (2) The Great Tribulation

#### (a) General information

The Bible provides more information about the Great Tribulation than about any other eschatological event. Jesus also addresses this topic in the Olivet Discourse (see Mat 24). The same is true for certain passages in the letters of the apostle Paul (e.g. 2Th 2:3-12) and in particular for Rev 6–19!

<sup>69</sup> See the transition from Rev 20 to 21. The millennial kingdom begins with Satan’s confinement (Rev 20:1-3) and the resurrection of the righteous martyrs (Rev 20:4) and ends with the destruction of Satan and the judgment of hell (lake of fire: Rev 20:10). Rev 20:11-15 talks about the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. The current creation will disappear at this point. Only the redeemed will enter into the New Creation (Rev 21:1ff); the others will be confined to hell along with Satan and his (fallen) angels.

The following passages in the Book of Isaiah talk about the Great Tribulation: chapters 2; 3; 13; 24–27; 34 and 63. The Great Tribulation will include judgments over the entire earth (i.e. Israel and the nations). Here are some examples:

- 5 • 2:19-21: People will hide in caves in the rocks (cf. Rev 6:16).  
 • 24:1-3: The Lord will devastate the earth (also affecting the earth's population: cf. Zec 13:8: Two thirds of Jews will die. Rev 6 and 9: A quarter and then another third of the earth's population will die in just two of the many judgments during the Great Tribulation).  
 10 • 26:20-21: God will be the initiator of these judgments. The Lord will "*come out of his dwelling*" to judge the wickedness of humankind. Therefore the expression "*day of the Lord*".

(b) *The extent of the Great Tribulation*

- Israel will be affected: Isa 3:8ff.  
 • The sins of leaders and women will be judged: 3:14-24.  
 • The nations as well will be affected: 34:2.  
 15 • The entire earth and cosmos are affected: 24:1-5.19-20.  
 • Demons will be afflicted: 24:21-22; cf. Jud 6; 2Pe 2:4.

Exceptions: Only a few will be spared: 24:6.13; 25:3; 26:20-21. "Those who are left in Zion", the remnant will be spared: 4:3 (cf. Rev 7:1-8).

20 (c) *The duration of the Great Tribulation*

- The Book of Isaiah does not tell us how long the Great Tribulation will last. However, the Book of Daniel indicates its duration: Dan 9:27: half of the last of the 70 "year weeks". In Daniel, one "week" or one "year week" refers to seven years. Half of such a week is 3 ½ years. This again corresponds to the time indication in Dan 7:25: "*a time, times and half a time*" = 3 ½ years (cf. also  
 25 Dan 12:7-13). The expression "*a time, [two] times and half a time*" is also found in Rev 12:14. "Times" refers to the so-called dual form, i.e. two times. For Daniel, "one time" means one year. See Daniel 4:16: King Nebuchadnezzar's punishment for his pride lasted 7 times, i.e. he suffered from an illness for 7 years. This duration of "*a time, times and half a time*" also corresponds to the  
 30 1260 days in Rev 12:6. A Jewish month has 30 days. 1260 days would therefore be 3 ½ years. Rev 11:2-3 mentions 1260 days and 42 months. 42 months are stated explicitly in Rev 13:5 for the duration of the Antichrist's kingdom (the beast). The kingdom of the Antichrist will therefore last 3 ½ years. Presumably, the natural catastrophes, referred to in Rev 6–16, commence in the first half of the so-called 70<sup>th</sup> year week in Dan 9:27, i.e. in the first half of the Great Tribulation lasting totally seven years. However, the Antichrist's persecution will only start at the beginning of the  
 35 second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> year week, i.e. after the first 3 ½ years (cf. Rev 13:5ff).<sup>70</sup>

### (3) The Kingdom of Peace (Millennium)

(a) *The most important passages*

Chapters 2; 4; 11–12; 24:21-23; 25:6-8; 27; 32; 35; 60–65.

(b) *For quite a detailed description of the kingdom, see Isa 11–12.*

<sup>70</sup> More on the 70 year weeks in Dan 9:24-27 in our commentary on the Book of Daniel as well as in the chapter on the Great Tribulation in our Eschatology brochure.

- 
- The Messiah is described: 11:1-2.
  - His kingdom is described: 11:3–12:6:
    1. Justice: 11:3-5.
    2. Peace (as a result of justice): 11:6-8:
      - 5      α) Peace amongst humans and animals.
      - β) Amongst the animals (which seemed to have been the case prior to the fall).
    3. The kingdom will extend to the entire earth: 11:9.
    4. Israel's return to its land: 11:10-12.
    5. The reunification of Judah and Ephraim: 11:13 (cf. Eze 37:15ff).
    - 10    6. The reign of Israel: 11:14 (Moab, Ammon and Edom will be subject to Israel).
    7. Topographic changes: 11:15-16.
      - α) The Red Sea will be dried up.
      - β) And the Euphrates will be divided (cf. Rev 16:12).
    8. The song of the saved (the remnant of Israel): 12:1-6; cf. 26:1-4.
- 15      (c)      *Details*
- Return of Israel: 11:11,12; 27:12-13; 35:10. Israel's population: in 1914 = 85,000 Jews on Israel's territory. In 1973 = 3,240,000 Jews in Israel. Approximately 6 million Jews lived in Israel at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A larger number still lives abroad, scattered across the world. The prophecy regarding the full-scale return has not yet been fulfilled.
  - 20    • Fruitful soil: 30:23; 32:15; 35:1.7; cf. Lev 26:19-20!
  - Jerusalem will be rebuilt: 2:1-4; 60:14-15; 62:7. Jerusalem will be the centre of the world.
  - The appearance of the King: 9:5.6.7; 22:22; 24:23; 32:1; 33:17.22; 49:6-10.
  - Repentance and salvation of the Jews: This will be accomplished with the return of the Messiah: 4:4; 12:1-6; 27:8-9; 32:15; 33:24; 60:21; 61:6; 62:12. For confirmations of these passages, see
  - 25    Zec 12:10; Rom 11:25-27 etc. A note of caution: Not all Jews will be saved (automatically) and enter into the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium). No! This only applies to those who believe: cf. Eze 20:34-38.
- (d)      *Repentance and salvation of the nations*
- The following passages refer to this, in particular: Isa 2:3; 18:7; 19:19-25; **25:6-9**; 60:3-16; 61:5-6.
- 30      (e)      *Further characteristics of the Millennium*
- Health and long life: 33:24; 35:5-6; 65:20.
  - Sin and death will still occur: 11:4; 65:20.
  - Righteousness and peace: 2:4; 12:1-3; 32:16-18; 60:11.
  - The working of the Holy Spirit: 32:15; 44:3; probably also “the dew of lights” in Isa 26:19.
  - 35    Indeed, the blessing begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See also our brochure on Pneumatology (the study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit). The prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 was first fulfilled at Pentecost (cf. Act 2). This prophecy will only be completely fulfilled when Christ returns. The cosmic phenomena mentioned in verse 31 should also take place then.
  - 40    This will be the time when Yahweh pours out his Spirit of repentance on the house of David (cf. Zec 12:10ff), which will happen when the Jews see the Son of Man, whom they crucified, coming with the clouds (cf. Rev 1:7).

## c.) Conclusions about the prophecies: chap. 66

The main themes of the book, which were already introduced in the first chapter, are once again taken up in this last chapter: Verse 14 summarises the entire chapter: “...*the hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes.*”

### 5 (1) The sin of Israel leads to judgment: vv. 1-6

The Lord does not desire merely ceremonial worship when the people’s heart is disobedient and distant (cf. Amo 5:21-25; Mic 6:6-8).

### (2) The eschatological restoration of Israel: vv. 7-14

10 Israel will experience a sudden rebirth and enter into the Messiah’s Kingdom of Peace. Jerusalem is presented as a mother who has just given birth to a son (vv. 7-8) and then nurses him (v. 11). The meaning of the metaphor of labour pains (vv. 7-9; see also 13:8 and 26:16-18) means: Birth follows labour pains, which means that salvation will follow the hardship of Israel. Ultimately, all blessing comes from the Lord, i.e. Yahweh (vv. 12-14a).

### (3) The day of the vengeance approaches: vv. 15-24

15 **Vv. 15-18:** Verse 15 is reminiscent of 24:21 and 26:21: “*Yahweh will punish*” and “*Yahweh is coming out of his dwelling*”. Verse 16 applies to all of humanity, i.e. all nations while verse 17 is directed against the rebellious Israelites.

20 **Vv. 19-21:** The glory of the Lord will be proclaimed over all the earth, especially in places where his name had not yet been preached. The Lord will send the saved Israelites to the nations so that they may proclaim the glory of Yahweh. And the gentiles will in turn accompany the Israelites to their native land (cf. Isa 14:1-2). We believe that this is the same pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem described in Zec 14:16ff in order to worship the Messiah (for his Parousia on the Mount of Olives, see Zec 14:1-6).

25 **Vv. 22-24:** Both salvation and judgment are eternal! Jesus quotes v. 24 in Mar 9:48: ➔ “*Their worm will not die*”: This is a metaphor for eternal damnation accompanied by never-ending agony (cf. Rev 14:9-12: no extinction or annihilation as some claim, e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses or Seventh-Day Adventists). In Greek, the text in Rev 14:11 literally states “*from ages to ages*” (both times as plural!), therefore the expression “*unquenchable fire*”!

30

## The Book of Isaiah reveals a three-fold salvation or redemption:

### 1. Salvation from Babylonian captivity.

35

### 2. Salvation from sin.

### 3. Eternal salvation from death and judgment.

**The book, however, ends with a stern warning and a word of judgment! We would do well to not only preach about grace and mercy, but also talk about God's judgment for all those who refuse the salvation offered in Christ, the Messiah, the one about whom Isaiah prophesied.**

5

**A M E N**



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## Table of contents

	<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE PROPHETS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	A.	The terms for prophets used in the O.T.....	2
	B.	The history of the prophets.....	3
	C.	The ministry of the prophets .....	4
5	D.	The message of the prophets.....	4
	E.	Characteristics of true prophets and true prophecies .....	5
	F.	The inspiration of the prophets .....	5
	G.	The fulfilment of prophecy .....	5
	H.	The relationship between the prophetic books and the rest of the O.T. and N.T. ....	6
10	I.	Timetable of Old Testament prophets who left writings behind .....	6
	<b>II.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	A.	Isaiah and his time .....	8
	1.	His name .....	8
	2.	His origins .....	8
15	3.	His time .....	8
	4.	His family .....	8
	5.	Contemporary prophets .....	9
	6.	His death.....	9
	7.	Explicit quotations of his name .....	9
20	8.	Historical context.....	9
	a.)	World powers that especially influenced Israel during the time of Isaiah .....	9
	(1)	Assyria.....	9
	(2)	Egypt .....	10
	b.)	Isaiah performed his ministry throughout three eras and the reign of four different kings .....	10
25	(1)	Uzziah and Jotham 792-736 BC .....	10
	(2)	The reign of Ahaz 735–716 BC .....	10
	(3)	Hezekiah 716–687 BC .....	10
	c.)	Spiritual evaluation of the political situation at the time .....	10
	<b>B.</b>	<b>The authenticity of the Book of Isaiah .....</b>	<b>11</b>
30	1.	Some objections from critics and our responses.....	11
	a.)	The content of chapters 40–66 differs from chapters 1–39.....	11
	b.)	The style of chapters 40–66 is different from chapters 1–39 .....	12
	c.)	Chapters 40–66 must have been written during the Babylonian exile and/or after the exile .....	12
	d.)	Isaiah could not have known about the name and actions of the Persian King Cyrus .....	12
35	2.	Confirmations for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah .....	13
	a.)	External proof for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah.....	13
	(1)	The Septuagint declares that Isaiah was the author of the entire Book of Isaiah.....	13
	(2)	Josephus states that Cyrus knew about the prophecy concerning him.....	13
	(3)	Isaiah scrolls found in Qumran do not confirm the hypothesis of Bible critics .....	13
40	(4)	The apocryphal book Jesus Sirach apparently also attributes the entire book to Isaiah .....	13
	b.)	Internal proof for the authenticity of the Book of Isaiah.....	14
	(1)	The N.T. contains 9 quotes from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> part of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 40–66) in which the name Isaiah is explicitly mentioned.....	14
45	(2)	Critics do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the (alleged) anonymity of Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah .....	14
	(3)	Structure and order testify to the unity of the entire book .....	14

- (4) Usage of the same expressions and images in all parts of the Book of Isaiah supports its authenticity .. 18

**C. The message of the Book of Isaiah ..... 19**

**III. COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH ..... 20**

**A. Self-exaltation: announcement of judgment (exile): chap. 1–39 ..... 20**

5	1.	Prophecies about Judah and Israel: chap. 1–12 ..... 20	20
	a.)	Denouncing of sin and announcement of judgment and restoration: chap. 1–6..... 21	21
	(1)	Introduction to the book: the people’s situation at the time of Isaiah: chap. 1 ..... 21	21
	(a)	The sin of Israel..... 21	21
	(b)	The alternatives (solution)..... 22	22
10	(c)	God’s plan of salvation for the people ..... 22	22
	(2)	Prophecies concerning judgment and the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 2–4 ..... 22	22
	(a)	The glory of the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 2:1-5 ..... 22	22
	(b)	Sin at the time of the prophet: chap. 2:6-8 ..... 23	23
	(c)	The judgments that precede the Kingdom of Peace (“the day of the Lord”): chap. 2:9 to 4:1 ..... 23	23
15	(d)	The effects of judgment: Israel will be purified: chap. 4:2-6 ..... 23	23
	(3)	Reasons for judgment: The parable of the vineyard and the “woe” repeated six times: chap. 5 ..... 23	23
	(4)	Vision and calling of Isaiah: chap. 6 ..... 24	24
	b.)	Prophecies concerning the Messiah: The impending judgment of Israel and the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 7–12 ..... 25	25
20	(1)	The prophecy concerning Immanuel: chap. 7..... 25	25
	(2)	The sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz: chap. 8..... 27	27
	(3)	Prophecy about the birth and rule of the Messiah: chap. 9:1-7..... 27	27
	(4)	Prophecy against Israel (Samaria): chap. 9:8 to 10:4 ..... 28	28
	(5)	Prophecies against Assyria: God both uses and judges the enemy: chap. 10:5-34 ..... 28	28
25	(6)	Prophecy about the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 11–12 ..... 28	28
	2.	Prophecies of judgment about the nations: chap. 13–23..... 29	29
	a.)	Against Babylon, Assyria and the Philistines: chap. 13–14..... 29	29
	(1)	Against the Babylonians: chap. 13–14:23 ..... 29	29
	(a)	Other nations will facilitate Israel’s return to its land: 14:1-3 ..... 30	30
30	(b)	Who is the king in chap. 14:4-17 (cf. Eze 28:12-19)?..... 30	30
	(2)	Against Assyria: chap. 14:24-27..... 31	31
	(3)	Against the Philistines: chap. 14:28-32 ..... 31	31
	b.)	Against Moab: chap. 15–16 ..... 32	32
	c.)	Against Damascus and Samaria: chap. 17 ..... 32	32
35	d.)	Against Ethiopia (Cush): chap. 18 ..... 32	32
	e.)	Against Egypt: chap. 19–20 ..... 32	32
	f.)	Against Babylon, Edom and Arabia: chap. 21 ..... 33	33
	(1)	Against Babylon: vv. 1-10..... 33	33
	(2)	Against Edom: vv. 11-12..... 33	33
40	(3)	Against Arabia: vv. 13-17 ..... 33	33
	g.)	Against Jerusalem: chap. 22..... 33	33
	h.)	Against Tyre and Sidon: chap. 23 ..... 34	34
	3.	Isaiah’s Apocalypse: Prophecies concerning the judgment of the world, the resurrection and the Messianic Kingdom: chap. 24–27..... 34	34
45	a.)	The positioning of Isaiah’s Apocalypse within the first part of the Book of Isaiah ..... 34	34
	b.)	The structure testifies to the cohesiveness and authenticity of Isaiah’s Apocalypse..... 35	35
	c.)	An eschatological pattern for clarification purposes ..... 37	37
	d.)	Commentary on the four parts of Isaiah’s Apocalypse ..... 37	37
	(1)	The first part: the judgment of the world: 24:1-20 ..... 37	37
50	(a)	Yahweh judges the entire earth: Vv. 1-6..... 38	38
	(b)	The ruined and hostile city: Vv. 7-12..... 39	39
	(c)	The olive harvest – a remnant will survive: V. 13..... 39	39
	(d)	The jubilation of those who escaped: Vv. 14-16a ..... 40	40
	(e)	The entire world is affected by the judgment: Vv. 16b-20..... 40	40
55	(2)	The second part: Yahweh reigns on Zion: 24:21–25:12 ..... 41	41
	(a)	The enemies are deposed – Yahweh reigns on Zion: 24:21-23 ..... 41	41
	(b)	Song of gratitude: The hostile city is destroyed: 25:1-5..... 43	43
	(c)	The feast on Mount Zion: 25:6-8 ..... 43	43

	(d)	Song of jubilation: The joy on Mount Zion: 25:9-10a .....	44
	(e)	Moab with its high fortified walls falls: 25:10b-12 .....	44
	(3)	The third part: Yahweh's victory: Restoration and judgment: chap. 26 .....	44
5	(a)	The song of victory in the land of Judah: 26:1-6 .....	46
	(b)	The prophet's prayer of faith: 26:7-19 .....	46
	(c)	Exhortation: Protection and judgment: 26:20-21 .....	48
	(4)	The fourth part: Destruction of enemies and restoration of Israel: chap. 27 .....	48
10	(a)	Leviathan (Satan) judged: 27:1 .....	49
	(b)	The vineyard song: Israel's restoration: 27:2-6 .....	49
	(c)	Punishment and judgment: 27:7-11 .....	50
	(d)	Return and restoration of Israel: 27:12-13 .....	50
	4.	Warning to Samaria and Jerusalem: chap. 28-33 .....	51
	a.)	Prophecy concerning the fall of Samaria and a warning to Jerusalem: chap. 28 .....	51
	b.)	Siege and salvation of Israel: chap. 29 .....	52
15	c.)	Condemnation of the alliance with Egypt: chap. 30-31 .....	52
	d.)	Just governance in the Kingdom of Peace: chap. 32 .....	53
	e.)	Prophecy concerning the destruction of Assyria and the salvation of Jerusalem: chap. 33 .....	53
	5.	Prophecy concerning the day of vengeance of the Lord and his Kingdom of Peace: chap. 34-35 .....	53
	6.	Parenthetical historical report: chap. 36-39 .....	54
20	<b>B.</b>	<b>Humiliation: Preview of the exile and salvation: chap. 40-55 .....</b>	<b>55</b>
	1.	Deliverance through Cyrus: chap. 40-48 .....	55
	a.)	Yahweh as the initiator of salvation: chap. 40 .....	56
	b.)	Yahweh (and not the idols) installs Cyrus as world ruler; Yahweh is also the one who elects and saves Israel: chap. 41 .....	56
25	c.)	Yahweh's servant (1 <sup>st</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 42 .....	57
	d.)	Yahweh saves Israel: chap. 43 .....	57
	e.)	Yahweh – and not the idols – saves Israel: chap. 44 .....	57
	f.)	Yahweh will save Israel through Cyrus: chap. 45 .....	58
	g.)	Yahweh's confrontation with the Babylonian gods: chap. 46 .....	59
30	h.)	The fall of Babylon: chap. 47 .....	59
	i.)	Yahweh's call to Israel: chap. 48 .....	59
	(1)	Call to repent: vv. 1-11 .....	59
	(2)	Call to acknowledge God's sovereignty: vv. 12-19 .....	60
	(3)	Call to leave Babylon: vv. 20-22 .....	60
35	j.)	Parenthesis: The monarchy of God .....	60
	(1)	God is sovereign over Satan: chap. 14:3-24 .....	61
	(2)	God is sovereign over so-called "gods" (idols) .....	61
	(3)	God is sovereign over the nations .....	61
40	(a)	Assyria .....	61
	(b)	Babylon .....	61
	(c)	Persia .....	61
	(d)	All nations .....	61
	(4)	God is sovereign over Sennacherib: chap. 36-37 .....	61
45	2.	Redemption through Yahweh's servant, the Messiah: chap. 49-55 .....	62
	a.)	Yahweh's servant and salvation (2 <sup>nd</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 49 .....	63
	(1)	Yahweh's Servant (i.e. the Messiah) and his ministry: vv. 1-13 .....	63
	(2)	Encouragement for Israel: vv. 14-26 .....	63
	b.)	Israel's captivity and Yahweh's obedient servant (3 <sup>rd</sup> Obed-Yahweh song): chap. 50 .....	63
50	(1)	The illustration of the certificate of divorce: vv. 1-3 .....	63
	(2)	Obedience and faithfulness of Yahweh's Servant (the Messiah): vv. 4-9 .....	63
	(3)	Call to listen to the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah: vv. 10-11 .....	64
	c.)	Yahweh's righteousness and salvation: chap. 51 .....	64
	(1)	God's actions in the past as proof of his faithfulness: vv. 1-3 .....	64
	(2)	The faithful ones will be saved: vv. 4-8 .....	64
55	(3)	The prayer of the faithful ones for God's intervention: vv. 9-16 .....	64
	(4)	God ends the judgement of his people: vv. 17-23 .....	65
	d.)	Salvation for Zion: chap. 52:1-12 .....	65
	(1)	Call to Jerusalem to prepare for the approaching salvation: vv. 1-2 .....	65
	(2)	God substantiates the deliverance of his people: vv. 3-6 .....	65
60	(3)	Praise of Israel's purchased rest for their salvation: vv. 7-10 .....	65
	(4)	Call to leave Babylon: vv. 11-12 .....	66

	e.)	The substitutional suffering and victory of Yahweh's servant (4 <sup>th</sup> Obed-Yahweh song):	
		chap. 52:13–53:12 .....	66
	(1)	His glory: 52:13-15.....	66
5	(2)	His contemptuous treatment: 53:1-3.....	66
	(3)	His suffering: 53:4-6.....	66
	(4)	His death: 53:7-9 .....	67
	(5)	His victory: 53:10-12.....	67
	f.)	Parenthesis: The Messiah.....	67
10	(1)	The names for the Messiah in the Book of Isaiah.....	67
	(2)	His origin.....	67
	(3)	His birth.....	67
	(4)	His qualifications.....	67
	(5)	His service (during his first coming: his incarnation).....	68
	(6)	His suffering.....	68
15	(7)	His death.....	68
	(8)	His resurrection .....	68
	g.)	Israel's restoration: chap. 54 .....	69
	(1)	God accepts Israel as an abandoned woman is accepted again by her husband: vv. 1-6 .....	69
20	(2)	Israel is permanently restored after punishment: vv. 7-10.....	69
	(3)	The beauty of restored Israel: vv. 11-17 .....	69
	h.)	The offer of mercy to the whole world: chap. 55 .....	70
	(1)	Call to accept the offer of mercy: vv. 1-3 .....	70
	(2)	The offer of grace also applies to the (gentile) nations: vv. 4-7 .....	70
	(3)	The certainty of the fulfilment of God's promises: Vv. 8-13 .....	70
25	C.	<b>Exaltation through repentance: chap. 56–66.....</b>	<b>70</b>
	1.	Sin and the call to repentance: chap. 56–59.....	71
	a.)	Salvation is offered to all: chap. 56:1-8 .....	71
	b.)	Idolatry and the sin of Israel: chap. 56:9–57:21.....	71
30	c.)	Sin and righteousness: chap. 58–59 .....	71
	(1)	False worship or Sabbath practices: 58:1-5 .....	71
	(2)	True worship or Sabbath practices: 58:6-14.....	72
	(3)	Sin separates from Yahweh: 59:1-8.....	72
	(4)	Israel is aware of its guilt: 59:9-15 .....	72
	(5)	Yahweh intervenes since no intermediary can be found: 59:16-21 .....	72
35	d.)	Parenthesis: sin in chapter 59.....	72
	(1)	The extent of the sin .....	72
	(2)	Consequences of sin (cf. Gal 6:7).....	73
	(3)	Salvation from sin.....	73
	(4)	The necessity for a redeemer .....	73
40	2.	Yahweh and his reign in Jerusalem: chap. 60–62.....	73
	a.)	The Kingdom of Peace.....	73
	b.)	The Messiah.....	73
	c.)	Jerusalem.....	74
	d.)	Israel.....	74
45	e.)	The nations.....	74
	f.)	The temple .....	74
	g.)	An eternal covenant .....	74
	3.	Judgment of the godless: chap. 63:1 to 65:16.....	74
	a.)	The judgement of Edom or the world: 63:1-6.....	74
50	b.)	Prayer for forgiveness and mercy: 63:7-19 .....	75
	c.)	Prayer for intervention and confession of sin: 64:1-12 .....	75
	d.)	God's response: 65:1-16 .....	75
	4.	The future glory of the righteous ones and eternal punishment of the godless: chap. 65:17–66:24.....	75
	a.)	Millennium and New Creation: 65:17-25 .....	75
55	b.)	Parenthesis: The day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation .....	76
	(1)	The day of the Lord (Yahweh) .....	76
	(2)	The Great Tribulation .....	76
	(a)	General information .....	76
	(b)	The extent of the Great Tribulation .....	77
60	(c)	The duration of the Great Tribulation .....	77
	(3)	The Kingdom of Peace (Millennium).....	77

	(a)	The most important passages .....	77
	(b)	For quite a detailed description of the kingdom, see Isa 11–12. ....	77
	(c)	Details .....	78
	(d)	Repentance and salvation of the nations .....	78
5	(e)	Further characteristics of the Millennium .....	78
	c.)	Conclusions about the prophecies: chap. 66 .....	79
	(1)	The sin of Israel leads to judgment: vv. 1-6 .....	79
	(2)	The eschatological restoration of Israel: vv. 7-14.....	79
	(3)	The day of the vengeance approaches: vv. 15-24.....	79
10	IV.	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>81</b>

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