

Isaiah

Isaiah 1:1-66:24

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-10-06

Isaiah

Isaiah 1:1-66:24

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-10-06

I. Fascinating facts and parallels

In our Bible survey we have come to the book of Isaiah. And what a marvelous book Isaiah is! It has sometimes been called the “Romans of the Old Testament” because of how clearly and richly it describes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, some have called it the fifth Gospel in the Bible.

It is the third longest book of the Bible, and many scholars claim that there are more details about Jesus in Isaiah than in any other Old Testament book. Whether that is the case or not, it is very rich in Christology. During the 50 or so minutes that I will spend on this sermon, we will barely give you a surface peak into the Christology of this book.

Here are a few fun facts that might help you to remember some features about Isaiah. Some people speak of it as the Bible in miniature. It has 66 chapters just like the Bible has 66 books. The first section of Isaiah has 39 chapters just like the Old Testament has 39 books, and the second section of Isaiah has 27 chapters just like the New Testament has 27 books.

Interestingly, the two sections of Isaiah also seem to have a corresponding emphasis to Old and New Testaments, with the first section of Isaiah having an Old Testament feel and the second section of the book having a New Testament feel. Scholars have pointed out that there are similar themes between chapter 1 and Genesis Revelation and the last chapter. The last verse of Isaiah takes us into eternity, with the residents of heaven looking at the wicked who will burn in hell for eternity. Isaiah and Revelation contain the seven times in the entire Bible where God refers to Himself as the First and the Last. Interestingly, the first chapter of the second section of Isaiah (chapter 40) begins with a voice crying in the wilderness just as the New Testament has John the Baptist as a voice crying in the wilderness. So for these and other reasons scholars have sometimes called Isaiah a miniature Bible. I’m not sure how significant that is, but it is a nice memory tool for at least remembering the parts of this amazing book.

But certainly Isaiah is a rich deposit of the entire Bible’s theology. It deals with the six days of creation as well as of the remaking of this creation at the end of history. It deals with all five points of Calvinism that Rodney spoke about in the past five weeks. It is rich in Trinitarian theology. In fact I probably quote Isaiah 48:16 as much as any New Testament passage to

prove the Trinity. In the previous verses, the future Messiah is identified as Yehowah. Amazing! He is divine. And verse 16 has this divine Messiah saying, “and now the Lord Yehowah and His Spirit have sent Me.” Yehowah and His Spirit are sending Yehowah to be the Messiah to save His people. You name the bit of theology, and Isaiah will likely have it.

II. The author = Isaiah

The author of this book is clearly Isaiah. Yet Evangelicals have this bizarre tendency to follow liberals in attributing Isaiah to two different authors. The Bible Project video has unfortunately given credence to this Deutero-Isaiah theory. But there is absolutely no legitimate basis for it. Liberals came up with the theory because they hate to admit that there is such a thing as divinely given prophecy that can predict very detailed history hundreds of years before they take place. They say that is impossible. Names like Cyrus were named and battles were described, and Israel’s return from Babylon was described, and so liberals insist that this book had to have been written after those events happened. And we say, “No. God wrote this book. He knows the future.” But evangelicals sometimes buy into the theory because they want to appear academically respectable. I’m all about academics, but the lust for academic respectability has made people lose all academic credibility in my mind.

For example, liberals love to point to the fact that Messiah is King in chapters 1-39 and is the Suffering Servant in chapters 40-66. And they think, “How could the same author speak of the Messiah in such different ways! Obviously it had to be two authors.” And it is true that there is a different emphasis in each section, but both sections refer to the Messiah as King and both sections refer to the Messiah as Servant. It is bogus to try to pit those two against each other. Liberals love to point to differences in language, style, and theology between the two sections, whereas conservatives have pointed out that there are far more similarities than differences, and 100% of those so-called differences can be completely explained by the difference in subject matter. It is obvious that the liberals are approaching the text with hostile presuppositions and evangelicals are approaching scholarship with naive presuppositions - as if there can be neutrality and total objectivity in academics.

Here’s the bottom line: the inspired Gospel of John quotes from Isaiah 6 and 53 (the two halves of the book supposedly written by different authors) and attributes both to the prophet Isaiah (John 12:37-41). So by inspiration we know that both halves were written by the same prophet. The inspired

apostle Paul quotes from Isaiah 10, 53, and 65 and gives credit for all three chapters to the prophet Isaiah. That's in Romans 9:27 and 10:16-21. You can see the unity of Isaiah and the authorship of Isaiah in other inspired quotes like Matthew 3:3; 12:17-21; Luke 3:4-6, and Acts 8:28. In fact, if you really want to get into it, Isaiah chapters 1,6,7,9,10,11,28,29,40,48,53,62, and 65 are all quoted by the New Testament as being written by Isaiah the prophet. Of course, all you have to do is read Isaiah and you realize the same thing. Isaiah mentions his own name as author in this book 16 times.

So if Isaiah 40-66 were written by a different author (as liberals and modern compromised evangelicals say), then Isaiah should not be made out to be a cool book by these men. On their theory, Isaiah is a deceptive book and the New Testament has deceived us as well. But the reverse is actually true. For The Bible Project and numerous other modern evangelicals to give even the slightest credence to the Deutero-Isaiah theory is an offense of the highest nature and needs to be called out as being an attack upon the inspiration of Scripture. I point these things out to you because sometimes your study bibles are compromised and the things you view on the web are infected by bad ideas. And sometimes you don't instantly recognize the danger in these bad ideas. OK, enough on that.

So who was this Isaiah? He is sometimes called the apostle Paul of the Old Testament. He came from a very distinguished and prestigious Jewish family, had a wife who was a prophetess and he fathered at least two sons by her (7:3; 8:3). One of the kids was named, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. How would you like a name like that? Well, it was a prophetic name that had a very cool meaning. I'll not tell you the meaning. You can look it up in the margin yourself.

Isaiah 1:1 says that the prophecies in this book were given under the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and tradition says that he died under King Manasseh. He kept rather close contact with the royal court, and was often persecuted by royalty. The tradition about his death says that he was stuffed into a hollow log and then sawn in half by King Manasseh.

When Isaiah started his ministry, Assyria had already become a growing threat under Tiglath-Pileser, and Sennacherib, the king of Assyria during the reign of Hezekiah, is the subject of a number of prophecies, and is described as decimating Judah and laying siege to Jerusalem in chapters 36-37. Assyria initially conquered countries in the east, but then began to conquer nation after nation in the West, and everyone was getting nervous. Isaiah predicted the fall of the northern ten tribes of Israel during the same times that Hosea

and Micah prophesied. So that gives you a little bit of a chronology.

But Isaiah also records the incredible threat that Assyria posed to the southern tribes in Judah. After conquering the northern ten tribes of Israel, Assyria's armies surrounded Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah humbled himself before God and asked for a supernatural victory. God sent out an angel and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, sending Sennacherib and the rest of his army fleeing. And your outline has one of three archaeological finds in Nineveh that describe the same siege of Jerusalem. Anyway, that riveting story is told in chapters 36-37, which forms a beautiful transition between the two halves of the book.

III. Overview of Isaiah

So let me give you a brief overview of Isaiah. Isaiah 1-39 is often called the Book of Judgments because of the judgments pronounced upon every nation. Isaiah is a very theonomic book. It does not just apply God's law to Israel. Isaiah proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that God judges all nations by the laws of His Word and expects all nations to implement His laws. This book completely undermines the antinomianism of the modern church.

But where chapters 1-39 are the Book of Judgments, chapters 40-66 is called the "Book of Comfort." It shows how God will extend the comfort of His Gospel to the ends of the earth. And yes, as a result of that grace, God will extend His law to the ends of the earth. So that is the big overview picture of the book.

Lets back up to chapter 1. Chapter 1 forms an introduction to the whole book. Isaiah introduces himself in verse 1, and says right from the get-go that these prophecies will take place under the reigns of four kings. You don't need any theory of two or three authors. In fact, he lays out the chapters according to the four epochs I have put in your outlines.

The first epoch started with the death of Uzziah and continued into the reign of Jotham. In chapter 6 he recalls an event that happened right before this chapter - His call to ministry in the year that King Uzziah died. So epoch one covers chapters 1-6.

Epoch two takes place during the reign of Ahaz, and covers all of chapters 7-27.

Epoch three takes place during the first 15 years of Hezekiah's reign, and covers chapters 28-39. Just knowing that chronology makes you realize that having a Christian king is not enough. Though God honored and blessed

Hezekiah, He still pronounces woes upon Jerusalem and all the other leaders during this period because most of the nation was still in rebellion. A top-down revival is a good thing, but God makes the case that it is not the most lasting thing. And the reason is that kings cannot change people's hearts. And archaeologists think that the seal of Hezekiah that's on the last page of your outlines shows some of his compromises in his early years. It comes from the first period of his reign (chapters 28-39) when he was still somewhat compromised. The compromise is that his seal has Assyria's pagan dominance imprinted on it. There is some cool history behind that.

Epoch four takes place during the last 15 years of Hezekiah's reign, and covers chapters 40-66. These prophecies bring enormous comfort to God's people.

So that is looking at the book through the lens of Isaiah's four stages of ministry. And knowing when each stage is written not only helps to oppose weird liberal ideas, but also aids us in our interpretation.

Now, let's fly our airplane a little bit lower so that we can see some of the details of the landscape. Chapters 1-12 give us God's covenant lawsuit against Jerusalem. And in the process God gives us a tale of two cities - the Old Jerusalem, which will be burned with fire long after Isaiah's death, and the New Jerusalem, which will be established under the Messiah and which will endure forever. That theme keeps getting repeated throughout the book. So chapters 1-12 is the covenant lawsuit against Jerusalem.

Chapters 13-27 is the covenant lawsuit against pagan nations. And again, the tale of two cities idea comes through, but this time it is the pagan cities of Tyre and Babylon that will be burned with fire and eventually will be replaced with the New Jerusalem. I find that fascinating. That means that it isn't simply the false religion of Judaism that will be replaced in the New Covenant (as hyper-preterists like to claim - they are so fixated on Israel). No. All cities that exalt themselves against the Messiah will be replaced by the New Jerusalem.

Chapters 28-39 deal with the rise and fall of the earthly city of Jerusalem once again. So it is revisiting that theme. It was once a faithful city but has now become a harlot city that is no different than paganism. And that section ends with a prediction that Babylon will take away everything that Hezekiah boastfully showed to the Babylonian embassy. Israel will be led away captive into Babylon in the future.

So at least thematically you can think of the 70-year exile as being the gap

between chapter 39 and 40. That helps you to get a map in your mind of where this book is headed.

Chapter 40 then starts the second half of the book, where the exile of Israel is predicted to be over. It contains incredibly detailed prophecies of how Israel will be released from Babylon when Cyrus the Great will conquer Babylon. There is a lot to rejoice in in chapters 40-48.

But sadly, God still has to address unbelief in the Jews who would return from Babylon under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Indeed, there are hints as to why God would have to motivate his people through renewed danger in the book of Esther. There is still unbelief and resistance to God during the post-exilic period. This makes it clear that the Post-Exilic period is not the Messianic kingdom. And lest people think that Cyrus was the Messiah, God is quick to show that the true Messiah in chapter 42 will be infinitely better.

And that Messiah is the main theme of the next section - chapters 49-55. Those chapters show that Jesus, the faithful servant of Yehowah, will completely fulfill God's mission for planet earth. He will conquer the earth.

Then chapters 56-66 show how the servants of the Messiah will inherit God's kingdom over time. So that's a little bit more detailed outline of the book.

But let's fly the airplane even lower so that we see a few more details we missed the first two times. Lets go back to chapter 1 one more time and dig into some of the cool features of this book. In some ways, chapter 1 encapsulates the message of the whole book. First, chapter 1 encapsulates the sinful depravity of man that is in need of the Gospel, just like the whole first section of the book portrays man's sinfulness and need of the Gospel.

Look at the incredibly graphic description of man's evil and man's desperate need in verses 4-6.

- Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. 5 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

That captures the predominant message of evil and judgment in the first half of the book. You don't appreciate the good news of the Gospel until you get the bad news of our need of the Gospel. He's using the same methodology

that Ray Comfort uses - he brings the law to bear in exposing man's sin, and only then does he give the Gospel.

So, having shown man's sinfulness, look now at verses 18-20, a section which presents the beauty of what the Gospel does. In some ways this showcases the second half of the book. (Keep in mind that chapter 1 is kind of an introduction that will showcase what will happen in the whole book.) Beginning at verse 18:

18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Despite the fact that Israel and Judah both deserved judgment, God was offering forgiveness to those who would turn to Him and believe the Gospel. And the Gospel was good news indeed - that though they were a stinking putrefying mass of sin and uncleanness, God would wash them and make them sparkling clean through the blood of Jesus Christ, their coming Messiah. It's a beautiful message.

But chapters 1-12 show how Judah would continue to increase in its wickedness and would eventually be cast out. Apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this is the trajectory of any nation. Chapter 1:12 complains, How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; Righteousness lodged in it, But now murderers.

There is no such thing as standing still in this fallen world. You are either advancing into righteousness through deliberate warfare against the world the flesh and the devil, or you are automatically sliding back into depravity. You might think that you are taking a break and simply resting. But if you are not pressing with all your might into the upward calling, you are drifting back into depravity. There is no neutrality.

So in this section a covenant lawsuit is proclaimed against Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, and against Israel, which would soon be cast out of the land. Jerusalem on earth becomes the symbol of everything that is wrong with this world, and chapters 1-2 describe a purifying fire that will destroy the Old Jerusalem that is so full of rebellion, idolatry, and injustice. It then contrasts that Old Jerusalem with a New Jerusalem that God will establish in the New Covenant that will be filled with justice and eventually bring peace to all the nations. It is heaven invading earth and transforming earth. And he gives us a sneak peak of the second half of the book in chapter 2:1-4

1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be

established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

It is a marvelous picture of Christ's kingdom advancing so effectively, that eventually all nations will submit to Jesus, embrace His law, and be at peace.

Sadly, the United Nations has had the audacity of placing a portion of verse 4 on their building, being careful to leave out the Messiah. Their hope is to use the City of Man to build peace, but they want to do it without Christ's grace. By deliberately quoting the results of what Christ will do in this verse without the Christ of the verse makes the United Nations a demonic antichrist. And they certainly act like an antichrist.

But Christ in chapters 1-2 guarantees that he will tear down the City of Man and replace it with the City of God, ruled over by Jesus, and advanced by His saints. He is using poetic language to talk about the church. It is a beautiful description of New Covenant times. And this contrast between the Old Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem continues as a major theme throughout the book. The New Jerusalem is mentioned 14 times in this book (in 2:3, 4:3-4; 24:23; 30:19; 33:20; 62:1,6; 65:18-19; 66:13,20) and the Old Jerusalem is mentioned 35 times, with the new gradually replacing the old.

And of course, it is the Messiah who accomplishes all of that. And even this first covenant lawsuit, which covers chapters 1-12, has constant references to the Messiah. What Ahaz was unwilling to do, Messiah would do. After Isaiah's amazing call to ministry is described in chapter 6, God gives what some people call "The Book of Immanuel" in chapters 7-12. You will see that Book of Immanuel highlighted in a side-note to the left of the first section of the outline on page 2. It still talks about judgment upon Israel and Judah through Assyria's invasion, but those warnings are surrounded by promises of God's protection and even more importantly, promises of a coming Messiah, who would be "God with us." On page 3 of your outlines you can see that the "book of Immanuel" is composed as a chiasm, with the heart of the chiasm being chapter 9.

“Book of Immanuel”

A Messiah’s birth promised – chapter 7

B Judgment (on Israel by Assyria) – chapter 8

C Messiah’s birth and kingdom promised – chapter 9

B’ Judgment (on Assyria by God) – chapter 10

A’ Messiah’s kingdom promised – chapters 11-12

Listen to the description of Christ’s birth and the establishment of his kingdom in chapter 9:6-7.

9:6 For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

God is putting His very reputation at stake in this promise. He guarantees the successful growth of Christ’s kingdom and His justice by pledging His zeal to be behind it. So even in the midst of judgments you have these constant forward references to Jesus being the solution. One of my favorite prophecies in this Messianic section is chapter 11. Why don’t you turn there, and we will read most of the chapter.

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

This is a reference to Jesus who was a descendant of Jesse, the father of David. Jesus has already been referred to as the Branch in chapter 4:2. But unlike other kings who descended from David, this one would be successful in establishing a rule of law by His grace. Verse 2 speaks of His empowerment with the Holy Spirit.

2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; 4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

And just as his grace extends throughout the rest of history, Christ’s judgments will extend against rebellious nations in history. Judgment is not

just an Old Testament king. Jesus continues this process of historical judgment. Verse 4 continues:

He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.
But now comes an incredible description of the trajectory of Christ's reign in history. It will be so extensive that even animals will begin to be tame, and humans will live longer. Verse 6:

6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. 10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

And it goes on to speak about the long process that will be necessary before this will happen. Chapter 12 then closes the Book of Immanuel with praise to God as missions extends throughout the earth.

But if you look at your outline on page 2 you will see that chapter 13 returns to the theme of judgment. This time it is judgment against all nations. Chapters 13-14 give us remarkable prophecies of how Babylon and Assyria will be destroyed, and these prophecies take place long before those judgments happened. Your outline shows a list of other nations that were destroyed in subsequent chapters - Philistia (14:28-32), Moab (15:1-16:14), Syria & Israel (17), Ethiopia (18:1-7; 20:1-6), Egypt (19:1-20:6), another prophecy about Babylon (21:1-10), Edom (21:11-12), Arabia (21:13-17), Judah (22:1-14), Shebna (22:15-25), Tyre (23:1-18), and all nations (24-27).

The implications of this long list are huge. If the only ones that God expected to live by His laws were the Jews (as many modern Christians claim) why on earth did God judge the Gentile nations for disobeying His Biblical laws that they are supposedly not responsible to keep? It makes no sense. Anti-theonomists constantly assume that God will never judge our nation for violating Biblical law, and they insist that they don't want God's laws in America anyway. "That's for the Jews." They ask, "Who wants God's laws against blasphemers, adulterers, and homosexuals?" And I raise my hand and say, "I do." I don't know how it is avoidable. I want God's blessing on our nation, not His curse.

When you read Isaiah you begin to realize that every modern nation is just as much in danger of God's wrath as those pagan nations were in Isaiah's

day. Isaiah is just giving us God's paradigm or plan for how He brings covenant lawsuits against all nations at all times. We have committed some of the same sins for which Babylon, Assyria, Ethiopia, Moab, Arabia, and other Gentile nations were condemned. Let's look at some examples.

We'll back up a bit actually and give God's overall evaluation. Chapter 5:24 explains the reason for the judgments in this book: "Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." When you do that, you are in trouble. Christians don't want to think about that in America, but we need to.

Look at chapter 24:5. Chapter 24 begins the section on worldwide judgment with this observation: "The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown define those three things as "The moral laws, positive statutes, and national covenant"¹ Has America cast off God's moral laws? Obviously yes. Have we cast off His civil statutes? Obviously yes. Have we broken covenant with God? However faulty you believe our founding covenants were, we have broken them. And if God expected pagan nations to obey His civil statutes or face judgment, He expects the same today. And you who vote next year need to vote as civil representatives of God, not as fearful prognosticators of which candidate will be worse. You represent God in your office of voter, not your safety, and will be held accountable by God for your votes.

In chapter 30 God pronounces judgments on "children who will not hear the law of Yehowah." Even the children of the nation were responsible to the law. The judgment in 42:24 was because "they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law."

And lest we think that His laws were only intended for Old Testament times, Isaiah prophesies over and over again that the Messiah will not only bring His gracious salvation, but he will teach the Gentile nations His laws. Why would He do that if the Gentile nations are not supposed to be under God's laws? Isaiah 2:3 says that during Christ's Gospel advance in the New Covenant,

Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His

¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 457.

paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. It is not just grace that will be preached in the New Covenant. God’s law will be taught and will be followed. Isaiah 8 prophesies the closing of the canon in AD 70 and declares to all the world once that time came that nothing more could be added to His law (8:16). We have added hundreds of thousands of laws to His law, but we have done so unlawfully. Once the Scriptures were completed, God commands all the earth in these words: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (8:20). He says that in the context of the New Covenant; after AD 70. So he is saying that to post AD 70 nations; nations like America. “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (8:20) That pretty much explains 99% of America’s laws. There is no light in them because they are not rooted in Scripture.

Chapter 42:4 prophesies of Christ’s kingdom, “He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.” Jesus is predicted as saying in 51:4, “For law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples.” In 42:11 God says of Jesus, “He will exalt the law and make it honorable.” The law is not honorable to pagans until God’s grace exalts it. So if that is Christ’s purpose, then we are fighting against Christ when we put down the law, or are ashamed of the law, or make it dishonorable under the excuse that America is not Israel. It doesn’t matter that America is not Israel; it is still subject to God’s law and His judgments just like the pagan nations back then were. God’s law reflects His character, and since God does not evolve and change, His law does not evolve and change. And judgments are surely coming unless America repents. We need to be prepared for those judgments and not think things will continue as they have always continued - stock market or otherwise.

And people say, “Well, if that is true, why hasn’t He judged us before?” And my answer is, “If you have not seen God’s hand of judgment upon the West, you have not been reading Western history with an eye to providence.” The numerous plagues that have hit the world over the past two hundred years are cause and effect judgments. You can think of smallpox (with over 300 million killed by that disease since the year 1800), or the Spanish Influenza (which killed 100 million people in a two year period, between 1918 and 1919), Bubonic Plague (with an estimated 100 million people killed), and a number of other deadly diseases that killed enough people that they could be labeled as plagues. How many people died in the godless war between the States? How many people have died in subsequent wars? How many people

have had freedoms taken away by the government? Did you know that Iowa and Nebraska made it into Kiplinger's ten worst states for taxes? That's a judgment. It's a mild one, but it's a judgment according to Scripture.

But according to Isaiah, the worst that America has suffered in the past is nothing compared to the kinds of judgments that the high-handed rebellion we are seeing in DC, and in our City Council, and in our states deserve. And people complain, "Why would God judge the citizens along with the officers?" Well, let me explain it this way: One of the slogans in 1776 was that "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." But the inverse of that is also true. If we fail to resist tyrants, we are disobeying God as a population, and are therefore implicitly guilty. That's why God killed 70,000 citizens when David numbered Israel in 2 Samuel 24. It doesn't sound fair to individualists, but God deals with us as covenantal units. Even the public has a responsibility to oppose the lawless actions of government, whether those are abortion, homosexuality, economic theft, the ungodly American census, or whatever.

So it should be no surprise to us that in chapters 28-35 God pronounces woes upon entire nations for the sins of their leaders as well as for their own sins. The citizens are held accountable. And the series of woes in those chapters cover a lot of territory. They cover issues of pride, self-sufficiency, drunkenness, formality in worship, entangling ourselves with God-hating nations, relying on military might, fraud, cowardice, immorality, murder, fornication, the death of innocents, bribery, graft, financial oppression, inflation of currency, and other sins. I can't think of a single sin they were judged for that our nation is not guilty of. We need to get used to applying the books that we read to our own situation and anticipating the future based on how God generally works.

And yet those same chapters give hope sprinkled throughout them that if there is repentance and a pursuing of God, God will relent of His disasters. Though He predicts that there will be no repentance in Isaiah's day, Isaiah predicts that under Christ nations across the world will indeed repent and seek the Lord, and the results will be glorious. So we have far greater hope for our nation to be able to be turned around than Isaiah did. I love chapter 35 that speaks of deserts blossoming and becoming productive again, healing of the blind, deaf, and lame. That section ends with very poetic descriptions of what could happen in this world if and when it turns entirely to Jesus. There will be no more judgments. Instead, chapter 35:8 says,

8 A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road,

although a fool, Shall not go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

May it be so Lord Jesus, even in our own day. But God knows how bad we can be at applying His Word, so he gives us very tangible examples to help us. Chapters 36-39 form a beautiful case study in how a nation can experience revival and blessing when its top officers turn to Him. It is the remarkable story of Hezekiah. It does end sadly with him pridefully showing off his wealth to the Babylonian embassy. Isaiah has to tell Hezekiah that Babylon will eventually steal everything that Hezekiah pridefully showed them. But it is still a very encouraging section of the book. God miraculously delivers Hezekiah from Sennacherib. That's grace. Later he miraculously heals him and extends his life another 15 years. That's grace. But Isaiah never lets us think that an earthly king is the solution. We realize that when even Hezekiah messes up. Earthly kings must put their trust in King Jesus - the Messiah who was to come. And we must never put our trust in princes.

And though chapters 40-48 will give fabulous predictions of King Cyrus delivering Israel, it makes it crystal clear that he doesn't measure up to Jesus, the true Servant of the Lord described in chapters 42 and 49. But Cyrus is an important figure in that section. Let me read chapter 48:17 and following. This is a section that would have given hope to Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and others many, many years later.

17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go. 18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea. 19 Your descendants also would have been like the sand, And the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; His name would not have been cut off Nor destroyed from before Me." 20 Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! With a voice of singing, Declare, proclaim this, Utter it to the end of the earth; Say, "The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob!"

So chapters 40-48 announce hope of a future return from a future exile. This is long before the exile has even happened. It's a marvelous prediction.

Chapters 49-55 return to this theme of Jesus being the true Servant of the Lord, and give marvelous prophecies of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and reign. Yes, Hezekiah was God's servant, but nothing like Messiah. Yes, Cyrus was God's servant, but nothing like the coming Messiah. Messiah will be the the Faithful Servant, Suffering Servant, Rejected Servant, the Kingly Servant, the Conquering Servant, and the Worshiped Servant. And He will

establish a kingdom which shall never end. He is the First and the Last, the Redeemer of Israel, our Creator and Sustainer. And in light of His all-sufficiency and glory, Isaiah points out what utter foolishness of trusting idols rather than the living God (chapter 44).

In chapter 52 He will bear the sins of His people and sprinkle many nations. In chapter 53 we have a remarkable prophecy of His life, death, and resurrection. In fact, it is so remarkable, that it is excluded from the public readings of the Jewish synagogues of today. They read all of Moses and the Prophets, but they leave out Isaiah 53. It looks too much like Jesus. If you want an amazing portrait of Jesus, read Isaiah 53. And many Jews have been converted as a result of reading that chapter.

This death and resurrection of the coming Messiah results in the perpetual covenant of peace being established in chapter 54. Chapter 55 is an invitation to partake of a life of complete fulfillment from Christ as a result of His atonement. We can be fully satisfied if we will only turn to Him and drink of Him. And that chapter warns us not to look for satisfaction from other things.

Chapter 56-59 speak of another future judgment on Jerusalem that will be hundreds of years in Isaiah's future, and an extension of the kingdom to the Gentiles, and chapter 60 speaks of this kingdom extending so powerfully around the world that the Gentiles will be converted, and they will in turn convert Israel. Chapter 63 is an exhortation to give God no rest in our prayer lives until this accomplished. We sing a beautiful song based on that chapter. But it is obvious from the later chapters that Christ's kingdom glory will not be established overnight. We must have patience and perseverance. It will gradually grow until it fills the earth. But let's read what future we have on planet earth. Chapter 65, beginning at verse 17.

17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying. 20 "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. 24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

Though this new heavens and new earth will find its fullest expression in eternity, this passage is clear that Christ begins to make all things new even now; even while babies are being born, and people still have sin, and while people are dying. It's the already and the not yet. Jesus already purchased everything needed for the new heavens and the new earth; He is progressively advancing the new heavens and the new earth, and there will be a final expression of it when death is forever abolished at the end of time. Death is the last enemy to be put down, which implies that all other enemies are conquered before Christ comes back.

Chapter 66 then forms a conclusion, just like chapter 1 formed an introduction. It takes us back to the God who created all things in Genesis 1, and uses that information to show that God is not going to forever put up with false worship and rebellion like his contemporaries were engaged in. Instead, he will do miracles like the incarnation (vv. 7-8), the overnight conversion of nations (v. 8), and extending His peace like a river and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream (v. 12). But always there will be antithesis between the wicked and the righteous (verses. 14-24), and there will be antithesis that lasts even into eternity. That's why hell will never be done away with. The last verse of the book indicates that God will not annihilate the wicked, but that hell will always be a testimony to His antithesis. His total victory will ensure that we rejoice in that antithesis throughout eternity.

IV. Key word - "salvation" (יְשׁוּעָה) 26x; Isaiah (יִשְׁעֵיָהוּ), which means "salvation is of Yehowah" 16x

So perhaps you can see why I say that the key word of this book is "salvation." Though it only occurs 26 times, the concept of salvation is pervasive. Isaiah's own name means "salvation is of Yehowah," so that is another 16 occurrences of another form of the word. And His message shows both the need of salvation and God's sovereign distribution of salvation. If you want an incredibly vivid example of God's sovereignty in election and reprobation, read chapter 6. But salvation is the key word.

V. Key verse - either Isaiah 9:6-7 or 53:6

There is debate on the key verse. Some give Isaiah 53:6 - "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD

has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” It is certainly a very central verse. But others (myself included) believe that Isaiah 9:6-7 is the key since it shows the victorious application of that atonement to the whole world.

VI. Key chapter - Isaiah 53

It’s hard to pick a key chapter, but it would probably be Isaiah 53 which speaks about the crucifixion, the hinge on which history turns.

VII. Two other extremely important passages - Is. 6 (Isaiah’s call); Is. 40 (God’s greatness)

Two other extremely important passages are Isaiah 6, which speaks of Isaiah’s call, and Isaiah 40, which speaks of God’s greatness and glory.

VIII. The Christ of Isaiah

I’ve put a few examples of the Christ of Isaiah in your outlines. But there is no better way of seeing Christ than to prayerfully read the book. And I’ve given you an assignment to find the verses that speak of Christ in 18 key chapters. Christ is in other chapters as well, but if you can find which verses speak of Jesus in those chapters, you definitely get extra points. But I want to end this sermon by reading a quote from the introduction to John Oswalt’s commentary. He says,

Of all the books in the OT, Isaiah is perhaps the richest. Its literary grandeur is unequalled. Its scope is unparalleled. The breadth of its view of God is unmatched. In so many ways it is a book of superlatives. Thus it is no wonder that Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the NT, and along with Psalms and Deuteronomy, one of the most frequently cited of all OT books. Study of it is an opportunity for unending inspiration and challenge.

...it comes to us as a word from God, a revelation of the inevitable conflict between divine glory and human pride, of the self-destruction which that pride must bring, and of the grace of God in restoring that destroyed humanity to himself. To read the book with the open eyes of the spirit is to see oneself, at times all too clearly, but also to see a God whose holiness is made irresistible by his love.²

And may we find the God of Isaiah irresistible to us. Amen.

² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 3.