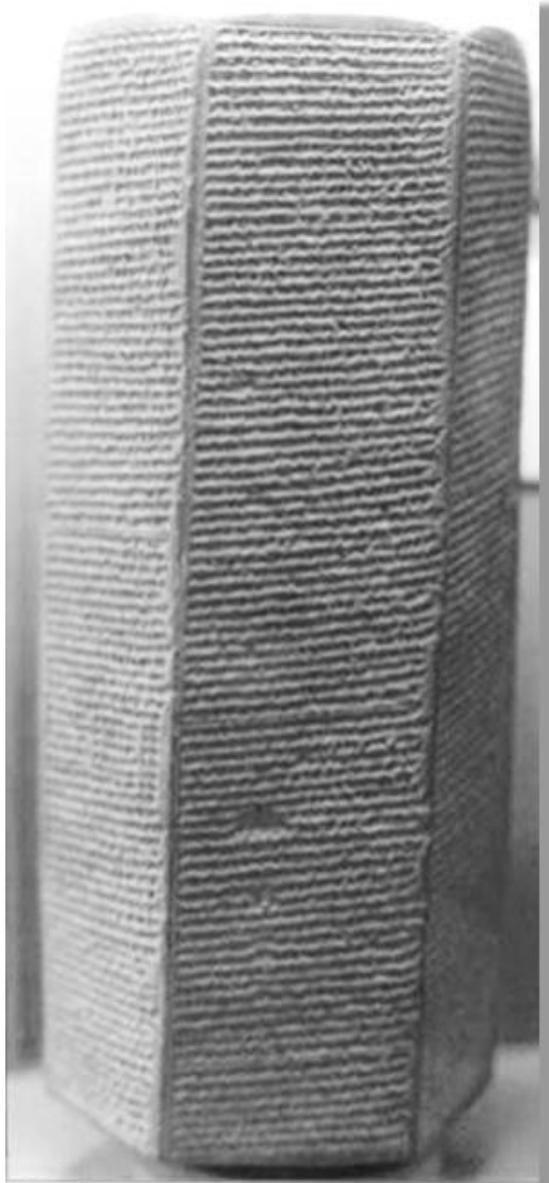


Exton Two Day Study 2019

A Study of Isaiah



Sennacherib's Prism

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The Times of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah

David T. Wheeler Jr.

Text: *Isaiah 1-5*

Introduction:

- I. Understanding the times to understand the prophesy
 - A. **Isaiah prophesied in times that were increasingly complex**
 1. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah did not operate in a vacuum at any time in their history
 - a. They were always intertwined in some way with the surrounding nations and their foreign policy, military strength, financial state, etc.
 - 1) Such was the case in the days of the Patriarchs
 - a) Abraham dwelt among the Hittites – Genesis 23
 - b) Isaac had to deal with the Philistines – Genesis 26
 - c) Jacob had to deal with those of Shechem – Genesis 34
 - d) Egypt played a most important part in Israelite history – Genesis 39-Exodus 15
 - 2) This was true during the days of the Judges
 - a) During this time the Israelites were punished by God at the hands of various surrounding nations:
 - 1] Mesopotamia – Judges 3:8
 - 2] Moab – Judges 3:14
 - 3] Canaan – Judges 4:2
 - 4] Philistia – 3:31; 13:1
 - 5] Midian – 6:1
 - 6] Ammon – 11:4
 - 3) As well as the United Kingdom
 - a) Ammon – I Samuel 11:1
 - b) Philistia – I Samuel 13:3
 - c) Amalek – I Samuel 15:2
 - d) Tyre – II Samuel 5:11
 - e) Moab – II Samuel 8:2
 - f) Zobah – II Samuel 8:3

- g) Syria – II Samuel 8:6
- h) Hamath – II Samuel 8:9-10
- i) Edom – II Samuel 8:14
- 4) It was the case in the Divided Kingdom
 - a) Egypt – I Kings 14:25
 - b) Syria – I Kings 15:18
 - c) Philistia – I Kings 16:15
 - d) Edom – II Kings 8:20
 - e) Moab – II Kings 3:4
 - f) Ammon – II Chronicles 20:10
 - g) Assyria – II Kings 15:19, 20, 29; 16:7-10; 17:5-6; 18:13-19:36
 - h) Babylon – II Kings 20:12-18; 24:1-25:28
- b. It is also helpful to understand that these external kingdoms were affecting one another
 - 1) Such knowledge can serve to give us a more comprehensive understanding of the history of God's people and the messages spoken to them by the Prophets
- 2. The 8th Century B.C. is certainly one example of a very complex time in the history of Israel
 - a. This is the time period that Isaiah delivers his prophesies to the nation of Judah
 - 1) As does Habakkuk and Zephaniah
 - b. Both nations (Judah and Israel) experience times of great prosperity followed by existences that are unsure, unsettling, frightening, and depressing

Body:

- I. Ancient Near East History During the Eighth Century B.C.
 - A. The Late Bronze Age Collapse
 - 1. The Bronze Age was a very important time in world history that is still not at all that well understood
 - 2. There is a great amount of evidence that this time period was one of the heights of cultural history in the ancient near east
 - a. There were several nations (major cultural centers) which took part in a major network of merchandise trade
 - 1) Egypt -
 - 2) Mycenae -
 - 3) Hittite –
 - 4) Troy –
 - 5) Ugarit –

- 6) Assyria – Along with the Egyptian Empire, the Assyrians made it through the collapse intact, although not unscathed
 - a) They retracted to a much smaller kingdom and for about a century simply maintained a smaller state
- b. The societies were all highly organized
 - 1) It consisted of those who were in the ruling class, scribes, craftsmen & artisans, construction workers, farmers, etc.
 - 2) Bronze was the all important metal at the time
 - a) There were some of these nations with great supplies of copper, while others had supplies of tin.
 - b) This was the main trade, but other items were widely traded such as olive oil, grain, wood, and skillfully produced bronze items
- c. This highly organized, interconnected society vanished quite suddenly over a period of no more than a couple of decades, taking place between the years 1200-1150 BC
 - 1) “Within a period of forty to fifty years at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the twelfth century almost every significant city in the eastern Mediterranean world was destroyed, many of them never to be occupied again.” (Drews, p. 4)
 - 2) The palace cities of Knossos (Mycenae), Hattusi (Hittite), Troy, Ugarit, and many others were quickly abandoned and burned within a few years of one another

B. The Post Bronze Age Collapse World (Iron Age)

1. The people who survived to abandon the cities moved further inland into the mountainous areas
 - a. These people formed into smaller kingdom type nations that we are accustomed to reading about in the Bible
 - 1) “The fruit of renewed order was first the rise of petty kingdoms, which guaranteed local stability but also exploited the subject peasantry. Then came the consolidation of these units into one great territorial state, a step which perhaps pleased industrial and commercial elements but was bitterly opposed by the local rulers.” (Starr, p. 129)
2. The Egyptian Empire did survive this time period under the leadership of Ramses II, but was severely weakened and was never as powerful as during the Bronze Age
 - a. “In the centuries from 1200 on Egypt lay in somnolence, divided into small states until a Libyan dynasty (the Twenty-second) reunited it about 945. Assyria and Babylonia were quiescent. The intervening stretches of the Fertile Crescent thus had an unusual opportunity to assert their local political and cultural independence; and so the interesting developments of the period largely occurred in Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria.” (Starr, p. 125)
3. This time period would be the latter stages of the Judges and the beginning of the United Monarchy
 - a. End of Conquest – (@ 1400 BC)

- b. Judges (1400-1050 BC)
 - c. Saul (1050-1010 BC)
 - d. David (1010-970 BC)
 - e. Solomon (970-930 BC)
4. Certainly, that is consistent with what is read in the Bible during that time span
- a. A small nation (Israel) dealing with other nations that are smaller (Aram, Ammon, Moab, Philistia), rather than an Empire that is massive (as Assyria, Babylon, and Persia grow to be later in world history)
 - b. The Assyrians make their first advances at re-establishing empire just a few decades later, but were unsuccessful
 - 1) “A successor, Tiglath Pileser I (1114-1076), was even able to exploit the collapse elsewhere by extending Assyrian rule briefly to the Mediterranean. But though Assyria was not directly hit by the great invasions it could not maintain so widely ranging a rule in an era of localism; for the next two centuries its kings sank back into obscurity.” (Starr, p. 130)
5. Neo-Assyrian Dominance: The Assyrians begin to establish empire again
- a. Beginning in 911 BC, Adad-Nirari II (911-891 BC) began to conquer some of the smaller foes in the immediate vicinity of Assyria
 - 1) His son, Tukulti-Ninurta II (891-884 BC) and grandson, Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), continued in this effort, going north and west subduing smaller kingdoms of Aramean and Hittite peoples
 - a) Ashurnasirpal II was especially brutal in his campaign as he proclaimed:
 - 1] “ Their men young and old I took prisoners. Of some I cut off their feet and hands; of others I cut off the ears noses and lips; of the young men's ears I made a heap; of the old men's heads I made a minaret. I exposed their heads as a trophy in front of their city. The male children and the female children I burned in flames; the city I destroyed and consumed with fire. ” (Clare & Tyler, p. 151)
 - b. These smaller nations are strongly opposed to the idea of being absorbed or ruled over by a larger foreign entity
 - 1) The next King of Assyria, Shalmaneser III, attempted to turn his interests toward consolidating the upper Levant under his banner, but was thwarted by a coalition of smaller kingdoms
 - a) “These kings, as well as their successors, faced serious opponents in almost every direction. To the south lay Babylonia, too weak to expand its own sway, yet so reluctant to accept alien rule that it was repeatedly to rebel against Assyrian rule. The mountains to the north stretched on so far that Assyria was never able to hold permanently more than the first foothills; under Assyrian pressure a native state called Urartu, based on Hurrian stock, rose in Armenia and barred Assyrian expansion in that direction.

Only westward, toward the valuable forests and trade centers of Syria, was the path of Assyrian aggression relatively simple, yet even in this district the Aramaic and Hittite kings were reluctant to submit. A combination of Phoenician and Syrian states, joined by King Ahab of

Israel, held the Assyrians at the great battle of Qarqar (853). Throughout the ninth century the wars of Assyria, however magniloquently described in royal records, were really raids which did not produce lasting empire.” (Starr, pp. 130-131)

- b) During his reign, Shalmaneser III did manage to place several kingdoms, including Damascus and Israel, under tribute, which was recorded on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III dating to 841 BC
- 2) From about 828-824 BC, Assyria dealt with civil war which allowed several neighbors to gain independence
 - a) The Babylonians, Medes, Manneans, Persians, Arameans, and the Neo-Hittites all managed to shake off Assyrian rule
 - 1] Shamshi-Adad V spent his entire reign (824-811 BC) re-establishing the Assyrian dominance of these areas
- 3) Adad-Nirari III succeeded his father in 811 as a young boy
 - a) His mother ruled from 811-806 BC, a time of peace for the Assyrian Empire
 - b) In 806 BC, Adad-nirari III took began his sole reign which lasted until 783.
 - 1] He subjugated the Arameans, Phoenicians, Philistines, Israelites, Neo-Hittites and Edomites.
 - 2] He forced tribute upon Ben-Hadad III of Damascus.
 - 3] He also subjugated the Persians, Medes and Manneans.
- c. The next three kings of Assyria rule during a period of stagnation
 - 1) Shalmaneser IV (783-773 BC)
 - 2) Ashur-Dan III (773-754 BC)
 - 3) Ashur-Nirari V (754-745 BC)
 - a) It is likely one of these kings that was preached to by the prophet Jonah
 - 1] Jonah is mentioned as being a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II in II Kings 14:25
 - a] Although the text may indicate that Jonah’s prophecies were spoken sometime prior to Jeroboam II’s reign
 - b] “He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.” -New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). (2 Ki 14:25). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.
 - b) This may mean that the period of stagnation is not one of powerlessness, but repentance

- d. The next king of Assyria, Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 BC), a former general of the Assyrian army, effectively ends the times of peace that the surrounding nations enjoyed
- 1) It is likely that he took this name as an appeal to prior kings of Assyria, and is known in the Scriptures as “Pul”
 - a) II Kings 15:19, “Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver so that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his rule.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:19
 - b) I Chronicles 5:26, “So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara and to the river of Gozan, to this day.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.
 - 2) He made sweeping changes to Assyria’s foreign policy after consolidating power
 - a) Assyria dominated several neighbors during Tiglath Pileser III’s first five years on the throne
 - 1] Babylon agrees to peace in the first year of his reign
 - 2] Urartu is conquered in 743 BC
 - 3] The Neo-Hittites, Syria, and Phoenicia in 742
 - 4] The Kingdom of Arpad in a three year siege from 742-740 BC
 - a] Mentioned by Rabshakeh in Isaiah 37:13, “Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Isaiah 37:13
 - 5] Israel is put under tribute in 738 BC
 - 6] The Medes and Persians from 737-736 BC
 - 7] Damascus falls in 734 BC as a result of king Ahaz hiring Tiglath Pileser III to do so
 - a] “So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.” Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried the people of it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:7-9
 - 8] Philistia is put made a vassal kingdom in 733 BC

- 9] Revolt put down in Babylon in 729 BC, Tiglath Pileser III crowns himself king of Assyria and Babylon
- b) He re-instituted a policy of depopulation that had been previously practiced under Adad Nirari I (1307-1275 BCE)
 - 1] It speaks of such in the days of Pekah of Israel. "In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria." – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:29
 - a] Contrary to popular thought about the conditions of those deported, indications are that the deportees were treated well, being an incredibly valuable resource to the empire.
 - 1} "The deportees, their labour and their abilities were extremely valuable to the Assyrian state, and their relocation was carefully planned and organised. We must not imagine treks of destitute fugitives who were easy prey for famine and disease: the deportees were meant to travel as comfortably and safely as possible in order to reach their destination in good physical shape. Whenever deportations are depicted in Assyrian imperial art, men, women and children are shown travelling in groups, often riding on vehicles or animals and never in bonds. There is no reason to doubt these depictions as Assyrian narrative art does not otherwise shy away from the graphic display of extreme violence, and contemporary text sources support the notion that the deportees were treated well, as attested for example in a letter from an Assyrian official to his king Tiglath-pileser III:

"As for the Aramaeans about whom the king my lord has written to me: 'Prepare them for their journey!' I shall give them their food supplies, clothes, a waterskin, a pair of shoes and oil. I do not have my donkeys yet, but once they are available, I will dispatch my convoy."

That the state continued to support the deportees once they had reached their destination is clear from another letter of the same author:

"As for the Aramaeans about whom the king my lord has said: 'They are to have wives!' We found numerous suitable women but their fathers refuse to give them in marriage, claiming: 'We will not consent unless they can pay the bride price.' Let them be paid so that the Aramaeans can get married."

As we have seen, the Assyrian resettlement policy divided existing communities into those who had to stay and those who had to leave, according to the needs of the state. Populations were relocated

within the boundaries of the empire, replacing and being replaced by people who were themselves moved. Our last source, especially, highlights that the state authorities actively encouraged a mixing of the new neighbours: the ultimate goal of the Assyrian resettlement policy was to create a homogeneous population with a shared culture and a common identity - that of "Assyrians". (Radner, 2012)

e. Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC)

- 1) When he came to the throne at the unexpected death of Tiglath Pileser III, Shalmaneser V has to deal with renewed rebellion in Babylon during his first two years
 - a) Hoshea, on the throne of Israel since 732 BC, took the opportunity to cease paying tribute to the Assyrian Empire
 - b) In 725 BC Shalmaneser V turned his focus once again towards Israel, putting them under tribute once more
 - 1] "Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute." – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:3
 - c) However, Shalmaneser V found out that Hoshea was appealing to Egypt as an ally against Assyria
 - 1] "But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:4-5
 - d) It is debated whether it was Shalmaneser V or Sargon II who completed the destruction of Samaria, due to the sudden change in leadership in Assyria for unknown reasons and in unknown circumstances
 - 1] "At this point the Assyrian accounts blink. When they reopen, Shalmaneser V – only five years on the throne and carrying on two sieges simultaneously – is dead. A new king has taken the throne under the royal name Sargon II. If Shalmaneser had died in battle the records would likely have said so. Most likely his successor Sargon II was a younger son of Tiglath Pileser, taking advantage of his brother's weakness to seize power; those long and apparently fruitless sieges cannot have been popular with the army and Shalmaneser V had also made himself unpopular back home by trying to introduce an obligation of forced labor to the people of Assur. This had not gone over well." (Bauer, p. 374)
 - 2] It is likely that Shalmaneser V took the city and began deportations of the people which were followed by more deportations during Sargon II's reign

f. Sargon II (722-705 BC)

- 1) He took over as king of Assyria sometime at the end of the Siege of Samaria in 722 BC and was responsible for the deportation of 27,290 people of Samaria being resettled in other Assyrian provinces
 - a) “I besieged and conquered Samarina. I took as booty 27,290 people who lived there. I gathered 50 chariots from them. And I taught the rest (of the deportees) their skills. I set my governor over them, and I imposed upon them the (same) tribute as the previous king.” (Albenda, pp. 284-285)
- 2) He had to deal with several rebellions during his reign:
 - a) He became preoccupied with Babylon in 721 BC due to revolt in which the Babylonians were assisted by the Elamites
 - 1] The three came to an agreement for peace in 720 BC which would last for ten years
 - b) He put down rebellion in Carchemish in 717 BC
 - c) In 716 BC he quashed rebellion of the Mannaeans, who were backed by a resurgent Urartu
 - d) In 714 BC he led a battle against Urartu which was extremely difficult due to the terrain, as Sargon II recorded in a letter he wrote to the god Ashur:
 - 1] “Mount Simirria, a great mountain peak that points upwards like the blade of a lance, and raises its head over the mountain where the goddess Belet-ili lives, whose two peaks lean against heaven on high, whose foundations reach into the midst of the netherworld below, which, like the back of a fish, has no road from one side to the other and whose ascent is difficult from front or back, ravines and chasms are deeply cut in its side, and seen from afar, it is shrouded in fear, it is not good to climb in a chariot or with galloping horses, and it is very hard to make infantry progress in it; yet, with the intelligence and wisdom that the gods Ea and Belet-ili destined for me and who broadened my stride to level the enemy land, I made my engineers carry heavy bronze axes, and they smashed the peaks of the high mountain as if it were limestone and made the road smooth. I took the head of my army and made the chariots, cavalry, and battle troops that accompany me fly over it like eagles. I made the support troops and foot soldiers follow them, and the camels and pack mules jumped over the peaks like goats raised in the mountains. I made the surging flood of Assyrians easily cross over its difficult height and on top of that mountain I set up camp”. (Mieroop, p. 216)
 - 2] As well as the methods they used to muster defenses
 - a] “Sargon’s own accounts speak admiringly of the Urartian king Rusas and the network of canals and wells which he built; of the herds of well-bred and guarded horses, raised in protected valleys until they were needed for war; of the splendid efficiency of Urartian communication, with watchtowers built high on mountain peaks, guarding heaps of fuel that could be lit at a moment’s notice. One beacon, lit, flared up on its

mountaintop into an enormous bonfire that appeared as a spark to the next distant post, where the next bonfire could then be lit. They shone like 'stars on mountaintops,' in Sargon's own words, and spread news of invasion faster than a messenger could ride." (Bauer, p. 376)

- e) Philistia became a Assyrian province in 711 BC after the taking of Ashdod
- f) He split his army in 710 BC to take Elam and Babylon, reclaiming the dual title of King of Babylon and Assyria
- g) In 709 BC king Midas of Phrygia submitted to Assyrian rule
 - 1] "Assyrian inscriptions refer to a King Mita of Muski, plausibly identified with the Greek Midas, who fought with the Assyrians in Cilicia in 716 B.C. and was defeated by Sargon in 709/08 B.C. Mita was evidently seeking access to the sea through Cilicia and for this purpose had made an alliance with Urartu and some of the Syro-Hittite states of North Syria against the Assyrians. While Midas' touch of gold may be safely assigned to legend, his kingdom was evidently an aggressive and growing state, starting to expand southwards to the older centers of the Fertile Crescent. Its known history, however, was brief because in the early seventh century Phrygia was overrun by a horde of nomads, the Cimmerians, who poured out of the Caucasus and swept across Asia Minor to the Aegean coast. It was in despair at his defeat by the Cimmerians that Midas was reputed to have committed suicide in 696/95 B.C." (Roebuck, p. 138)

3) Death:

- a) In 705 BC Sargon was killed while Assyria was engaged in battle with the Cimmerians,
 - 1] "The Cimmerians, whose invasion had such a paralyzing effect in Anatolia, were an Iranian people from southern Russia, driven, according to Greek tradition, by their kindred, the Scythians, into the Caucasus. From the mountains they poured down into eastern Anatolia as a warrior horde, bent on plunder and destruction. Even after ravaging Urartu and Phrygia the roving bands of horsemen continued to terrorize and to raid. In 705 BC they were turned from Assyria by Sargon II at the cost of his life, and the Assyrian kings continued to keep them out of the Fertile Crescent. After the destruction of Phrygia the main group turned toward the Black Sea, near which they ultimately settled and were absorbed into the native population." (Roebuck, p. 140)
- g. Sennacherib (705-681 BC)
 - 1) After the death of Sargon II, Sennacherib's ascension to the throne was not a smooth transition
 - a) His father had exhibited a very low opinion of his ability to rule Assyria and spoke publicly of this on several occasions

1] “Sargon had, apparently, not been reticent in spreading his opinion of his son abroad. When Sennacherib came to the throne, the provinces – convinced that the crown prince was boneless and inadequate – celebrated their coming freedom from Assyrian rule”. (Bauer, p. 382)

2) He had to put down revolt in Babylon in 703 BC

a) “Sennacherib himself came sweeping down like the wrath of Assur and broke through the allied front line, barely pausing. Merodach-Baladan ran from the battlefield and crept into the marshes of the Sealand, which he knew well, to hide himself; Sennacherib marched the rest of the way to Babylon, which prudently opened its gates as soon as it saw the Assyrian king on the horizon. Sennacherib came through the open gate, but chose to send Babylon a message: he ransacked the city, took almost a quarter of a million captives, and destroyed the fields and groves of anyone who had joined the alliance against him. (Bauer, p. 384)

II. History of Israel and Judah During the Eighth Century B.C.

** In the dates of the reigns/co-regencies of the kings of Israel and Judah I am going forth with the dates given by Edwin R. Thiele in The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings for the sake of time and my sanity **

A. Israel

1. Prophets:

a. Jonah

1) He was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II

a) “He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 14:25

b) E. R. Thiele dates Jeroboam II as coregent with Jehoash 793 to 782 BC and sole ruler 782 to 753 BC.

2) Outside of this verse, he is known through the Book of Jonah

a) Interestingly, the “period of Assyrian weakness” from approximately 783-745 BC potentially coincides with the repentance of the Ninevites

1] “Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.’ Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and it said, ‘In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his

wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.’ When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update – Jonah 3:4-10

- b. Amos
 - c. Hosea
 - d. Micah
2. Jeroboam II (41 Years; co-regent with Jehoash 793-782 BC; sole reign 782-753 BC)
- a. Economic
 - 1) The economic times under king Jeroboam II were extraordinary
 - a) This may be directly related to the lack of Assyrian expansion toward the region of Syria and Israel until the days of Tiglath Pileser III
 - b) The prophet Amos (c. 755 BC) speaks of such prosperity in Samaria during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah
 - 1] “I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Amos 3:15
 - 2] “Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Amos 5:11
 - 3] “Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall, Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves, Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers’ banqueting will pass away.” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Amos 6:4-7
 - 4] “Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, “When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain, And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, So as to buy the helpless for money And the needy for a pair of sandals, And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Amos 8:4-6
 - 2) The land area was the greatest it had been since Solomon
 - 3) “He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 14:25

b. Military

- 1) The restoration of the land area (see above) is certainly an indication of the military power of the Northern Kingdom in the early eighth century BC
- 2) Jeroboam II is said to have “saved” Israel from their affliction, presumably the oppression that they experienced at the hands of the kings of Syria
 - a) Specifically mentioning in II Kings 14:25 that he had gained the “entrance of Hamath”
 - b) “For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, which was very bitter; for there was neither bond nor free, nor was there any helper for Israel. The LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 14:25
 - c) The text in II Kings 13 speaks of the misery in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II’s father and grandfather, Jehoash and Jehoahaz, respectively.

1] The “deliverer” in II Kings 13:5 is thought by many to be a reference to Jeroboam II

a] “The LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Arameans; and the sons of Israel lived in their tents as formerly.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 13:5

b] “Many interpreters overlook the significance of this section because of its relatively short and straightforward presentation of a king whose reign saw few major challenges. Like all Israelite monarchs, Jeroboam is judged to be evil because he followed the sins of his older namesake... Nevertheless, this brief account indicates that Jeroboam’s reign holds utmost significance for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah since he was the first and only monarch ever to restore control over the entire extent of the empire once controlled by David and Solomon. The reign of Jeroboam ben Joash resolves many problems faced by Israel and Judah from the time of Solomon onward. Lebo Hamath is identified with the region of Hamath in upper Syria, the Sea of the Arabah is identified with the Red Sea to the south, and Jeroboam’s control of Hamath and Damascus restores Aram to Israel’s control for the first time since the Arameans revolted against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:23-25). Because Joash subdued Amaziah, who in turn had defeated Edom, Jeroboam controlled Edom.

Jeroboam’s reign sees an end to the greatest challenge faced by Israel through the ninth and early eighth centuries: the Arameans. Although Joash had allied with the Assyrians, enabling Israel to control Aram, the accounts of the Omride dynasty, the Aramean wars, and the rise of the Jehu dynasty point to YHWH’s direct involvement in the affairs of Israel through the prophets Elijah and Elisha. YHWH had sworn to

destroy the house of Omri for its idolatry, to employ the Arameans for that purpose, and to replace the Omrides with the house of Jehu. This goal was finally accomplished during the reign of Jeroboam. In keeping with the patterns in the book of Judges, the land had rest for forty years during his reign. YHWH's decision to deliver Israel from oppression is based on YHWH's observation of Israel's oppression in the book of Judges (see also 2 Kgs 13:4, which precedes the promise of a "deliverer" for Israel in 2 Kgs 13:5). Furthermore, the land lacked anyone who was free or bonded, a cryptic reference to YHWH's threats to destroy the entire house of Omri, both free and bond (1 Kgs 21:21; 2 Kgs 9:8), as well as the house of Jeroboam beforehand (1 Kgs 14:10). Furthermore, v. 27 states that YHWH "delivered" Israel by the hand of Jeroboam, which indicates that Jeroboam is the "deliverer" of Israel mentioned in 2 Kgs 13:5. The restoration is foreseen by the prophet Jonah ben Amittai, about whom we are told nothing else, although a much later prophetic book concerning YHWH's decision to spare Nineveh is attributed to him. When all of these factors are considered, the reign of Jeroboam ben Joash emerges as the culmination of the Jehu history." (Sweeney, pp. 368-369)

c. Spiritual State:

- 1) The text of I Kings 14: 24 says of Jeroboam II, "He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin."

3. Zechariah (6 months; 752 BC)/Shallum (1 Month; 752 BC)

- a. There is such little information about the incredibly short reigns of these two kings of Israel that to expect a completely different circumstance or policy that Jeroboam II would be unlikely
- b. Zechariah is the last of the Jehu dynasty as was promised to Jehu four generations prior
 - 1) "The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 10:30
 - 2) "Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him before the people and killed him, and reigned in his place. Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. This is the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." And so it was." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:10-12
- c. The double assassinations recorded in II Kings 15:10-14 do indicate some distress on the world stage

- 1) “The reginal account concerning Zechariah ben Jeroboam focuses on his assassination by Shallum ben Jabesh. Zechariah was the last of the Jehu dynasty, and his assassination after only six months on the throne marks the conclusion of the long period of Israel’s stability brought about by the nation’s alliance with the Assyrian Empire. Although the reasons for Shallum’s coup against Zechariah are not mentioned, he was likely motivated by an interest in changing Israel’s alliance from Assyria to Aram. Shallum’s own assassination by Menahem ben Gadi was motivated by an interest in returning to the Assyrian orbit, and the assassination of Pekahiah ben Menahem was likewise motivated by Pekah’s interest in allying with Aram. Israel’s break with Assyria proved to be disastrous, as both Aram and Israel were eventually overrun by the Assyrians.... The text indicates that Zechariah’s assassination was carried out in the midst of a public assembly. The speed with which Shallum was dispatched by Menahem ben Gadi suggests that the usurper lacked popular support.” (Sweeney, pp. 371-372)
4. Menahem (10 years; 752-742 BC)/Pekahiah///Pekah(2 years; 742-740 BC) (20 years; 752-732 BC)
 - a. Economic
 - 1) Indications are that Israel is still experiencing economic success during the reign of Menahem, although that would change quickly
 - a) A tribute of 1,000 talents of silver is paid to Tiglath Pileser III of Assyria to maintain Israel’s independence
 - 1] “Then Menahem exacted the money from Israel, even from all the mighty men of wealth, from each man fifty shekels of silver to pay the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria returned and did not remain there in the land.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:20
 - a] Figuring an 80 pound talent, the number of “mighty men of wealth” who bore the burden of paying 50 shekels of silver to the king of Assyria would have been about 63,700. (www.unitconversion.org, 1998-2009)
 - 2) After Pekahiah is assassinated by Pekah in 740 BC, a large portion of the kingdom is lost to Assyrian advances
 - a) “In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:29
 - 1] This would have been a particularly heavy blow to the economy of Israel, with the land that was taken being the most fertile
 - b. Military
 - 1) There is much upheaval during this time about which the scriptures are largely silent
 - a) Thiele posits a rival kingdom set up by Pekah in Nisan of 752 BC

- 1] “If Pekah's reign of 20 years terminated in 732 B.c., it began in 752, the year when Menahem took the throne in Samaria. I formerly held the view that Pekah, as the destroyer of the dynasty of Menahem, threw back his reign to begin with the year when that dynasty came to power. Now, however, it seems clear to me that the evidence points definitely to Pekah actually having begun to rule in Gilead as a rival to Menahem at the time of Menahem's murder of Shallum. Shallum is said to have been "the son of Jabesh" (2 Ki 15: 10). If this means that Shallum was from Jabesh Gilead, it would indicate Gileadite efforts toward the control of Israel's crown. When Pekah later eliminated Pekahiah, it was with the aid of a group of Gileadites (2 Ki 15 : 25). The elimination of Gileadite Shallum would secure for Pekah the support of that area in making him its king. In close proximity to Syria, he might be expected to carry on a policy of friend-ship with his northern neighbor, a policy which was later pursued in the activities of the Syro-Ephraimitic league when Rezin joined Pekah in the effort to replace Ahaz with “the son of Tabeal” (Isa 7 : 6). Albright has called attention to the fact that "Ayanur the Tabelite" mentioned in an Assyrian letter discovered at Nimrud in 1952, "bears a name typical of the desert fringes of Palestine and Syria." Such a native of Gileadite ancestry would, under the circumstances, be a logical nominee by Pekah and Rezin for Judah's throne. Perhaps the outstanding reason for placing the beginning of Pekah's reign in 752 B.C. is the fact that when Jotham came to the throne as regent in 750 B.C., his accession is dated to Pekah's second year (2 Ki 15:32). Such a synchronism would hardly be possible had not Pekah at that time been in the second year of his kingship. And the accession of Ahaz is likewise dated in the seventeenth year (2 Ki 16:I) of a reign of Pekah beginning in 752 B.C. These synchronisms are not artificial and they are not late. No scribe of a late period unacquainted with the complicated historical details of the time would or could have invented them. That Menahem must have had a rival and that he did not feel his hold on the throne secure, is indicated by the fact that at the time of Tiglath-pileser's invasion in 743 B.C., he gave him a thousand talents of silver "that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand" (2 Ki 15: 19). The scribes of Judah must have had some reason for recognizing Pekah rather than Menahem. Pekah's inexorable opposition to Assyrian encroachments is universally recognized, in sharp contrast to the vacillating attitude of Menahem, who gave tribute to secure Assyrian support. Pekah became the sole king of Israel when he assassinated Pekahiah in 740-739.” (Thiele, THE SYNCHRONISMS OF THE HEBREW KINGS: A RE-EVALUATION: II, pp. 9-10)
- 2] “When Jotham began his rule in Judah his reign was synchronized with that of Pekah and not with Menahem, although both were then on their thrones. This points to close Judean ties with Pekah than with Menahem, and a common resistance against the Assyrian threat could well have been the cause. The fact that Jotham's accession in 751/50 is synchronized with the years of Pekah

provides strong evidence that Pekah was then ruling as king. And the fact that Ahaz's accession in 736/35 is likewise synchronized with a reign of Pekah that began in 752/51 provides further proof that it was at that time that Pekah began his reign. These synchronisms of II Kings 15:32 and 16:1 are not artificial and they are not late. No scribe of a later period unacquainted with the historical details of the time would, or could, have invented them.” (Thiele, p. 125)

- b) Some who espouse the “rival kingdom” theory cite Hosea 5:5 as evidence, with the text using “Israel” and “Ephraim” while using the words “them “ and “their” as well.

1] “Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also has stumbled with them.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Hosea 5:5

- 2) In this “divided monarchy” situation, it has been supposed that Menahem of Israel(Samaria) and Ahaz of Judah were Assyrian supporters while Pekah of Israel (Gilead) and Rezin of Syria were anti-Assyrian who wished to form a league to oppose the expansion of Tiglath Pileser III

- a) Isaiah chapter 7 seems to indicate such a desire for an alliance:

1] “Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Isaiah 7:1

c. Spiritual State:

- 1) There are two indicators of the spiritual state of Israel during the reigns of these kings

- a) It is said that they continued in the golden calf worship that Jeroboam set up

1] Menahem, “He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:18

2] Pekahiah, “He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:24

3] Pekah, “He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:28

- b) Their reigns are also spoken of in the prophets

1] Hosea’s prophecy only says that it is “in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel”, but the claim to be during the reigns of the kings of Judah from Uzziah through Hezekiah indicates that these kings are under consideration – Hosea 1:1

- 2] Micah's prophecy claims to be "concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" – Micah 1:1
5. Hoshea (9 years; 732-723 BC)
- a. Economic
- 1) During Hoshea's time on the throne, being in the final nine years of Israel, the country languishes severely
 - a) After the prior annexation and deportation by Assyria during the reign of Pekah, the numbers of people and the ability of the nation to produce would be severely diminished
 - 1] "In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:29
 - 2] The tribute required by Assyria is apparently so high that Hoshea decides that with the death of Tiglath Pileser III and accession of Shalmaneser V that they will seek to align with Egypt to escape the steep cost of vassalage to hand of Assyria
 - a] "But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:4
- b. Military
- 1) As mentioned above, militarily they were no match for Assyria, and had no allies left to side with
 - a) Hoshea appealed to Osorkon IV (So in the Bible) to deliver them, but Osorkon was actually a vassal himself at the time to the Nubians
 - b) Hoshea and the kingdom of Israel, basically reduced to the city of Samaria was left to fend for themselves
- c. Spiritual State:
- 1) Their spiritual state during this time seems to have improved slightly, albeit far too late
 - a) "He did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:2
 - 1] Whatever this means, Israel still fell because of idolatry
 - a] Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God.

Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:7-12

- 2) The nation of Israel fell to Assyria and were subjected to her policies of deportation under Shalmaneser V and Sargon II
 - a) “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 17:6
 - b) A cuneiform inscription on the walls of Dur-Sharrukin (Korsabad) has this to say regarding Israel’s fate at the hands of Sargon II:
 - 1] In my first year of reign *** the people of Samaria *** to the number of 27,290 ... I carried away. Fifty chariots for my royal equipment I selected. The city I rebuilt. I made it greater than it was before. People of the lands I had conquered I settled therein. My Tartan I placed over them as governor.” (Luckenbill, p. 4)

B. Judah

1. Uzziah (52 years; co-regency with Amaziah 792-768 BC; sole reign 768-751 BC; co-regency with Jotham due to leprosy 751-740 BC) (known in the Kings accounts as Azariah)
 - a. Economic
 - 1) The years of Uzziah are the most prosperous years Judah experienced during the Divided Kingdom
 - 2) The accounts of his accomplishments in II Chronicles are extremely impressive
 - a) This began with re-establishing the shipping port on the Red Sea, “He built Eloth and restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 26:2
 - b) “He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock, both in the lowland and in the plain. He also had plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 26:10
 - 1] Some have been confused by this verse as several versions say Uzziah had farmers and vinedressers “in Carmel” (KJV, NKJV, NET); however, “carmel” means “fruitful field” so the generic term is likely meant rather than the place of Mt. Carmel which is in northern Israel
 - b. Military

- 1) Uzziah's military exploits are described in the most detail in II Chronicles 26:6-15
 - 2) A list of his accomplishments are as follows:
 - a) Subdued the Philistines – 26:6-7
 - b) Subdued the Arabians and Meunites – 26:7
 - c) Received tribute from Ammon – 26:8
 - d) He became famous for the strength of his military – 26:8
 - e) He fortified cities and built lookout towers in Judah – 26:9-10
 - f) He assembled a very large standing army – 26:11-13
 - g) He equipped the military with technology – 26:14-15
 - 3) All of Uzziah's focus seems to have been in the south
 - a) The places listed as military exploits are all to the east and west of Judah
 - 1] Philistia, Arabia, Ammon, and Meun are mentioned
 - 2] "his fame extended to the border of Egypt" – 26:8
 - b) This likely because Israel posed no threat at this time due to their focus being toward Syria (see under Jeroboam II "Military" on page 12 of this outline)
 - 1] Uzziah's active reign was largely concurrent with Jeroboam II's
 - 2] There is no mention of the two having contact with one another in the Kings or Chronicles as they were both preoccupied in the opposite directions
- c. Spiritual State:
- 1) Uzziah was described as a good king who "sought God in the days of Zechariah" – II Chronicles 26:5
 - a) "He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 26:4-5
 - 2) Later in his life, in 751 BC according to Thiele, Uzziah was overtaken in pride and tried to offer incense in the Temple of God
 - a) "But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense." – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 26:16
 - b) It was this act which caused God to strike Uzziah with leprosy, leading to a co-regency with Jotham where Jotham would have been the public and acting king
 - c) "Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him,

“It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God.” But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him. King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. And Jotham his son was over the king’s house judging the people of the land.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 26:17-21

2. Jotham (16 years; co-regency with Uzziah 751-740 BC; sole reign from 740-735 BC)
 - a. Economic
 - 1) He had some building projects centered in Jerusalem
 - a) He rebuilt the “Upper Gate” (II Kings 15:35; II Chronicles 27:3)
 - b) He fortified the wall around the Ophel – II Chronicles 27:3
 - c) “Moreover, he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and he built fortresses and towers on the wooded hills.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:4
 - 2) He received tribute from Ammon for three years
 - a) “He fought also with the king of the Ammonites and prevailed over them so that the Ammonites gave him during that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kors of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The Ammonites also paid him this amount in the second and in the third year.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:5
 - b. Military
 - 1) All of the unrest in Israel surrounding the times of Menahem/Pekahiah/Pekah happen during Jotham’s co-regency with Uzziah
 - 2) Jotham sought the Lord, which led to Judah experiencing temporal blessings
 - a) “So Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:6
 - 3) It was during his sole reign that Syria and Israel began to try to recruit Judah into a league to oppose the Assyrian expansion
 - a) “In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 15:37
 - 4) Thiele claims that Jotham was deposed by a pro-Assyrian faction in Judah in 735 BC in favor of his son Ahaz
 - a) “In 736 and 735 Tiglath-pileser was again in the northwest, in the regions of Mount Nal and Urartu. Many in Judah would no doubt think that the time had come to submit or be crushed. In 735 it is altogether

likely that a pro-Assyrian group felt itself strong enough to force Jotham into retirement and to place Ahaz on the throne. Although Jotham continued to live to his (Ahaz') twentieth year (II Kings 15:30), 732/31, it was Ahaz who directed affairs from 735." (Thiele, p. 127)

c. Spiritual State:

1) Jotham continued in the righteous ways of Uzziah

- a) "He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done; however he did not enter the temple of the LORD." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:2
- b) "he ordered his ways before the LORD his God." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:6

2) The general citizenry of Judah did not follow suit

- a) "But the people continued acting corruptly." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 27:2
 - 1] Taking the tendencies of Jotham's son, Ahaz, into consideration, it is not difficult to conclude the spiritual direction that the people were taking
 - a] Ammon is mentioned as a conquest of Jotham's reign
 - b] It is said of Ahaz that he "made his son pass through the fire" and "he burned his children in the fire", seemingly a reference to the Ammonite god Molech

3) Prophets:

- a) Isaiah
- b) Habakkuk
- c) Zephaniah

3. Ahaz

a. Economic

1) The economic times in Ahaz' day seemed to be dire

- a) The nation appeared to be at the mercy of Israel and Syria (see Military)
 - 1] "Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him." - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:5
 - a] "They also took away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria." – II Chronicles 28:8
 - 2] There were many of Judah who were killed or taken captive to Damascus and Samaria – II Chronicles 28:5-8
 - a] "carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought them to Damascus" – II Chronicles 28:5
 - b] "killed one hundred and twenty thousand in one day" – II Chronicles 28:6

- c] “children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters” – II Chronicles 28:8
 - b) The taking of Elath (I Kings 14:22; II Chronicles 26:2) was reversed during Ahaz’ reign
 - 1] “At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram, and cleared the Judeans out of Elath entirely; and the Arameans came to Elath and have lived there to this day.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:6
 - a] This would be a huge blow to trade for Israel
 - c) The surrounding southern nations are also taking advantage of their weakness during Ahaz reign
 - 1] “For again the Edomites had come and attacked Judah and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the Negev of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, and Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and they settled there. For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 28:17-19
- 2) Ahaz appealing to Assyria and Tiglath Pileser III for help against the coalition of Israel/Syria only brought further financial ruin on the situation in Judah
 - a) “Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:8
 - b) Meeting the continued tribute required by Assyria proved to be difficult
 - 1] “Then King Ahaz cut off the borders of the stands, and removed the laver from them; he also took down the sea from the bronze oxen which were under it and put it on a pavement of stone. The covered way for the sabbath which they had built in the house, and the outer entry of the king, he removed from the house of the LORD because of the king of Assyria.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:17-18
 - a] These were likely taken and hidden so the king of Assyria could not take them since they were later taken by Babylon
 - 1] “Now the bronze pillars which belonged to the house of the LORD and the stands and the bronze sea, which were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried all their bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the pans and all the bronze vessels which were used in temple service. The captain of the guard also took away the bowls, the firepans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the pans and the drink offering bowls, what was fine gold and what was fine silver. The two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve bronze bulls that were under the sea, and the

stands, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD—the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update Jeremiah 52:17-20

- c) Ahaz seeking help from Assyria actually worsened the situation for Judah

1] “So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the LORD and out of the palace of the king and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria, it did not help him.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Kings 16:20-21

b. Military

- 1) The Judean military might was apparently non-existent

- a) Such was the case “because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.” – II Chronicles 28:6

1] The prophet Oded says, “But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out to meet the army which came to Samaria and said to them, “Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 28:9

2] “For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel” – New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 28:19

c. Spiritual State:

- 1) This appears to be one of the worst times ever in Judah

- a) Ahaz seemed to desire to worship any god except the God of Israel

1] “...for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 28:19

a] “Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they became the downfall of him and all Israel. Moreover, when Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, he cut the utensils of the house of God in pieces; and he closed the doors of the house of the LORD and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem. In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers, to anger.” - New American Standard Bible: 1995 update II Chronicles 28:22-25

2] He is said to have instituted worship:

a] To Molech – II Kings 16:3; II Chronicles 28:3

- b] On an altar that was designed like one at Damascus – II Kings 16:10-16
 - c] To the gods of Damascus which had defeated him” – II Chronicles 28:23
 - d] To Baal – II Chronicles 28:2
 - e] On the high places – II Kings 16:4; II Chronicles 28:4
- 2) He took part in the terrible practice of child sacrifice to Molech
- a) He “burned his children in the fire” – II Chronicles 28:3
 - b) He made his own “son pass through the fire” – II Kings 16:3
4. Hezekiah
- a. Economic
 - b. Military
 - c. Spiritual State:
 - 1) Prophets:
 - a) Isaiah
 - b) Habakkuk
 - c) Zephaniah

Conclusion:

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EndLesson1

The Prophet Isaiah

Jeremy Hodges

Text: Isaiah 6

Introduction:

- I. In the study of what, surely, is one of the greatest pieces of prophetic literature in scripture, it is fitting to discuss the prophet himself. Isaiah son of Amoz has a particularly evident place in the history of Israel and Judah, being witnessed within the book attributed to him, as well as in other works. (II Kings 19:2, 20; 20:1; II Chronicles 26:22; 32:20, 32)
- II. The prophet was “burdened (מַשָּׂא - *massā*, #4853)” with a great and awesome oracle that he was to bring against his own people due to their long pattern of unfaithful behavior toward the God to whom they had sworn fidelity. The message of the prophet was one of doom, but also hope. That message of terror uses some of the strongest language of denunciation we have recorded. However, the message of comfort is so beautiful *Isaiah* is sometimes called the “fifth gospel.”
- III. How can we better understand the work as a whole by looking at the man who was to bring such a weighty message? Is there a value to trying to learn about the prophet and His assignment from the Almighty? Is there even such a historical person to whom we can point as responsible for such an awesome communication from God?
- IV. By taking a look at the chapter that records the prophet's commission, much can be seen about how best to see the man as the agent of God's instruction. For the purposes of this study, we will examine what is preserved in scripture before we discuss the impact of modern scholarship on how we read this great book of prophecy and promise.

BODY:

- III. “I am Undone!”
 - B. **Isaiah's commission begins with one of the standout places in scripture containing a vision often termed “theophany.” Although the word is of Greek origin, and at one time referred to the appearance of a god to mortals, it is now almost exclusively used in a biblical context.**
 1. What might be the purpose of such a vision relating to the commission of the prophet Isaiah?

- a) The extraordinary vision of God's mighty dwelling place in heaven would certainly be an impressive vision to relate, especially given that Isaiah's immediate admission was the uncleanness of his people, and even himself. This admission is perfectly in line with the message that the prophet is to relate to the people. Israel had agreed to serve a holy God and had failed in their covenant to be faithful to His character and commands.
- b) The vision that Isaiah sees is exactly that, and it is the only vision recorded in the book. We can know it is a vision, because no human being can see YHWH with his eyes and live. (Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:20; Judges 13:22; John 1:18) Therefore, this is a revelation from God for a specific purpose, and that purpose is connected with Isaiah's commission. It is not necessary, therefore, that Isaiah is physically in the temple, because it seems evident that the temple he is witnessing is the true one in heaven.
2. All of the elements in the vision cooperatively speak to the purpose of it.
- c) The presence of the throne speaks to God's role and position of both judge and king. He was judging His people for failing to respect His rule. This is further underlined in Isaiah's chosen title of Adonai for the God he sees. (Isaiah 6:1)
- d) The “train (שׂוּל - *shūl* #7757)” or hem is likely a reference to his glory, along with the smoke that recalled His presence in the earthly temple. (cf. II Chronicles 7:1-3; Revelation 15:7-8) God's glory and might was impressive to the point of overpowering.
- e) His servants (the *seraphim*) attended to Him and accomplished His will with superhuman ability and might.
- f) Thus, the mighty God who rules over and judges all of creation is going to speak to His rebellious people concerning their refusal to follow His divine will. Isaiah was to be the agent of that communication.
- B. How should we understand the chosen placement of this vision of God's presence?
1. That the vision of the throne room of YHWH accompanies Isaiah's commission should not be overlooked, as the prophet was sent to speak words of the weightiest import. To declare the unrighteousness of Israel and Judah's actions and the resulting destruction would hardly be a popular work. Therefore the sign of Isaiah's true authority would give some credence to his message.
2. The time of this revelation of the heavenly throne is also worthy of noting, as it occurred in the year of Uzziah's death. (II Kings 15:1-7; II Chronicles 26) Uzziah (Azariah) had been a mostly successful Judean king in matters of battle. His success might have been what led him to attempt to come before the throne of YHWH in the temple in an unauthorized manner and subsequently was struck with leprosy, which did not leave him until the day of his demise. Such an event may well have given the prophet pause when seeing the heavenly throne appearing before him. His familiarity with the king was notable, thus his affliction may well have been taken to heart by the

prophet. (II Chronicles 26:22)

3. That this vision appeared in the day of Uzziah's death would have underscored that no physical king would be the solution to the coming woes that would befall Judah. Uzziah had been successful militarily, but before God he had failed. At his death, it was evident that he was not a way for Judah to be saved. This theme continues throughout Isaiah, that God's people can only trust in Him, not in physical rulers. The king was dead, but the King still ruled on His throne.
- C. It is interesting to compare this call of the prophet with other “theophanies.” There were times in which God allowed humans to have a glimpse into the heavenly reality by using images to convey concepts that were supernatural and beyond the physical.
1. In Exodus 24:3-11, the seventy elders of Israel with Moses and Aaron ate a memorial meal before the throne of YHWH under the “pavement of sapphire” to enact the covenant God made with Israel.
 2. Ezekiel the prophet was allowed to see the vision of the throne room of YHWH, the throne being described in the manner of a war chariot, and heavenly beings at the four corners. (Ezekiel 1) When we compare later visions (Ezekiel 10), we learn that the four beings are called “*cherubim*.” The description of the cherubim in this instance bears similarities to the *seraphim* in Isaiah, as well as some interesting differences.
 - a. *Cherub* (כְּרוּב - *kəruv* #3742)
 - 1) Four faces; four wings.
 - 2) Two wings touching other cherub's wings; two wings covering body.
 - 3) Always associated with God's presence, and communicate His power and holiness. (Genesis 3:24; I Samuel 4:4; II Samuel 6:2; I Kings 6-8; II Kings 19:15; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16)
 - 4) Despite God's holiness, the cherubim are also associated with God's mercy. (Exodus 25:18-22; Numbers 7:89; Hebrews 9:5)
 - b. *Seraph* (שֶׂרָפִים - *sārāph* #8314)
 - 1) Six wings; no attention paid to faces.
 - 2) *Seraphim* stood above (!) the throne.
 - 3) Connected with the idea of “fire” or “burning.”
 - 4) Used to describe serpents whose bite “burned” in Numbers 21:6-8; Deuteronomy 8:15.
 - 5) Doubtful that the beings Isaiah saw were serpentine in form.

3. In Daniel 7, the throne of the “Ancient of Days” is present to indicate justice as well as rule, as judgment was awarded to the saints. The Son of Man was provided with an everlasting kingdom in the midst of Roman persecution.
4. Typical of John's *Revelation*, in chapters 4-5, the elements of the other “theophanies” are combined to present a unified picture of God's work with the Messiah to bring about the plan of salvation. This was a message of comfort for saints enduring persecution in the first century.

II. Isaiah's declaration of unworthiness is not solely present to communicate the awesome nature of the vision, but is tied to the mission of the prophet. There are other examples of similar declarations that help us see a larger context.

- A. Perhaps the most clearly similar account is in Luke 5:1-11, where upon seeing Jesus' true authority shown in accomplishing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter fell down and asked Jesus to leave him. Instead, Jesus commissioned the first apostles. It is unclear whether this is intentionally presented as a connection to Isaiah's commission.
- B. Zechariah 3 records a narrative in heaven in which God's forgiveness was given to the “unworthy” priest Joshua who was accused by Satan. This allowed the priest to continue on with God's work as needed.
- C. Isaiah's confession is specifically connected to unclean speech, which gives us a forward look into what God is calling the prophet to do, which is speak to the unclean people by whom he is surrounded. So often we characterize major sins as things done with our hands, but it is a sinful use of the lips that concerns Isaiah most prominently. (Psalm 39:1; 59:12; James 3)

IV. “Here Am I Send Me!”

III. Isaiah shows the attitude that is often present with prophets doing the job that needs to be done. Even the language of “Here am I (הִנְנִי)” has a lot of previous context related to a volunteer spirit. We can see this same response in God's call to Abraham in Genesis 22. When God addresses His loyal servant, he responds by saying, “here.” It showed that he was not only listening, but ready to obey.

- A. A similar case is seen with Samuel in I Samuel 3. When God addressed His loyal prophet, he responded by saying, “here.” The young Samuel was ready to hear and responded with respect.
- B. In much the same way, Isaiah responded to God's question about a ready servant to take a message to His people. He responded with an indication that he was ready, and that he

was willing to do the job. It is an important consideration that it was after his knowledge that he had been freed from the uncleanness of sin that he was ready to take God's message to the people. Forgiveness is a powerful motivator.

- IV. The record of God's commission of the prophet Isaiah is interesting in many ways, and one of them is regarding the placement.
- A. When compared to Jeremiah's call, which is placed at the beginning of the book (Jeremiah 1:1-10), Isaiah's comes conspicuously late, especially since he has already given several visions previous to the commission. Those scholars who promote multiple authorship for *Isaiah*, or seek evidence of later redaction will point to the late appearance of the prophet's call as evidence of their view. This is not the only reason that the call would appear late, however. To assume that this was not a part of the original text brings up questions not easily answered.
- B. If it was added in the place it is with intention, why not at the beginning of the book? If this is an error, was it a sign that the author/redactor didn't think clearly about the flow of the book? It is evident from so many other places in scripture that Hebrew narrative is not always placed in chronological order. Taking the natural comparison to *Jeremiah* further, many of the weeping prophet's visions are placed out of order in which they were given. (cf. Jeremiah 37:1; 45:1)
- C. The likelihood is much greater that the visions that were presented before the record of the prophet's call were intentionally recorded as a sort of a prologue, describing a format or structure for the book. Those who see a singular authorship for the book might find this an appealing answer.
- V. Scripture provides many other commissions of prophets that allow for a comparison to the one pertaining to *Isaiah*.
- A. The commission of Moses in Exodus 3 features an audience with God, but not in the throne room.
1. Moses was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:6)
 2. Moses was also sent to Israel, and was also given God's "word" to be effective. (Exodus 4:10-13)
 3. Moses was to proclaim God's word to Pharaoh who would not listen, but God would make Moses effective. (Exodus 3:18-22; 4:21-22)
 4. The prophet was not sure of his abilities, and thus was given Aaron as a mouthpiece. (Exodus 4:14-17)

- B. As mentioned before, the call of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:1-10) has distinct differences in placement in the book, and other differences are noticed.
1. Like Moses, Jeremiah was not sure of his effectiveness, due to age. (Jeremiah 1:6)
 2. Similar to Isaiah, his mouth was touched, and God's words were provided. (Jeremiah 1:9-10)
 3. Jeremiah was sent to a people who would not listen, but God would make him strong. (Jeremiah 1:16-19)
- C. One of the most striking similarities between Isaiah's call and that of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-3) is the presence of the vision of the throne room as discussed above, but there are other similarities to consider.
1. God's words were provided in an interaction with the prophet's mouth, figured by a scroll that was to be eaten. (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3)
 2. Ezekiel was sent to a people who were not going to listen, but the prophet would be strong. (Ezekiel 2:1-7; 3:4-11)
- VI. The places where the call of Isaiah is quoted or alluded to gives us more information about God's cryptic words about Isaiah's mission.
- A. It can seem at first that God does not want His people to repent, but if that is the case, why send a prophet? Additionally, if His will is that they be hardened, why preach a message of warning if they do not change? We can see from later passages how universal this idea is in scripture. God's words of warning will soften those who will to please Him, and the rest will be hardened.
1. It is seen in scripture that God sending His authorized messengers can have a hardening effect on the arrogant. (Exodus 4:21; 7:1-4, 13-22; 8:15-19, 32; 9:7-12, 34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4-8; I Samuel 6:6) Hardening of hearts is not the direct action of God that suspends the will of the unrepentant, but His message itself hardens. (John 3:16-21)
- B. In all three of the parable of the soils accounts, Jesus specifically refers to this same call of Isaiah to explain the reason for His method of teaching with parables. (Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10) There were some who would hear God's word, and would respond with good and honest hearts (the good soil). The others, however, would respond with varying levels of difficulty or unbelief.
- C. It is not only in the parable of the soils that this particular mission to Isaiah is quoted, but every instance has the same context. There are some who will believe upon hearing the

word of God, but in others it causes unbelief. (John 12:37-41; Acts 28:25-29; Romans 11:7-8) Either of these eventualities is still perfectly in line with the loyalty of God, as He allows each person the moral agency to do with His word as they will, and allow the consequences of their actions to come to pass.

VII. The very idea of God's people needing “ears to hear and eyes to see” is a necessary assumption going into this mission of Isaiah. It's a long-standing theme in scripture that is present in both testaments, and it tells us what was at the root of Israel's dismal failure at the time of Isaiah. (cf. Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:18; 32:3; 44:18; Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2; 40:4; 44:5; Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 14:35; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9)

III. “Lord How Long?”

VIII. Isaiah's question and God's answer allows for a description of the book's contents as a whole. The initial visions, as discussed above, show a vacillating message of destruction and restoration. This dichotomy is also at the heart of God's character of justice, and covenant loyalty. His justice demands that He act with discipline against those who continue in idolatry and wickedness. His covenant faithfulness demands that He provide mercy toward those who are truly penitent. This dual promise of discipline and restoration was present in the original covenant.

- A. The book's prophetic sections are an answer to Isaiah's question, because they not only describe in poetic beauty the vast annihilation that God planned to bring upon His unfaithful people, but also His magnificent grace in providing a lasting solution for peace and righteousness. Between death and exile, the emptiness in the land would be a shocking demonstration of God's wrath toward an unfaithful nation. However, the promise of the “tenth” serving as a remnant that would be saved.
 - B. As a whole, the book of Isaiah bears out God's commission of the prophet, in that he is speaking to the people about their impending doom at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. He hardened them through words of warning, and God's wrath was executed by Nebuchadnezzar as promised. However, there were some who heeded the message of the prophet and were able to continue as the royal seed even in Babylonian captivity. These messages also accomplished a much larger purpose in God's plan.
- IX. *Isaiah's* prophecies communicated a promise of destruction, but they also contained a message of hope. That hope was not just in the return of the exiles to Judah, but in a fuller restoration under a later King who ruled according to God's values perfectly. Therefore, the “holy seed” was not only the preservation of the Davidic line, but the ultimate promise of God's servant

Messiah.

- X. The wording of Isaiah's question is also of some interest, as so many before asked when God's hand of punishment would be lifted from His people who were being disciplined. (Psalm 6:1-3; 13:1-2; 35:17-21; 74:1-11; 79:1-7; 80:4-7; 89:46-48; 90:13-17; 94:1-7; Habakkuk 1:1-4; Zechariah 1:12-17)
- A. Isaiah was not only asking when his commission would be complete, he was asking about God's mighty wrath and when it would be subsided. The prophet speaks about the surety of God's actions, and asks before it begins what the people must endure.

IV. "Here We Are Send Us?"

- A. The debate concerning the authorship of *Isaiah* is almost impossible to avoid when speaking about the identity and the life of the prophet who penned the book. After all, if the work is the result of many authors writing in different eras, cobbled together through the work of a redactor, then the idea of "the prophet" at all is in question. Many students of Isaiah take it for granted that Isaiah is not the product of a single author, while others vociferously defend the more "conservative" stance of a real Isaiah being commissioned by God.
- B. The history of the debate surrounding the authorship of *Isaiah* is necessarily connected to the higher critical movement within biblical scholarship (documentary hypothesis, etc). This type of criticism seeks to address scripture completely outside of the realm of the supernatural, and characterizes the words of the prophets as only the product of their time, and directed to their immediate audiences. This is difficult to square with the actual words of scripture that certainly do purport to speak about things in the distant future.
- C. The major solution proposed by scholars who deny the supernatural element inherent to prophecy is to claim the prophet was not prophesying at the time claimed by the book, but at a later date. The specific prophecies recorded are, therefore, accurate due to later information recorded after the facts, and then placed in the mouth of a prophet who supposedly lived before the events. Others may be somewhat less bold and place the prophet's work nearer to the events so that they are able to reliably predict the outcomes which they assert, as opposed to prophesy far in advance.
- D. Some problems with these theories arise, particularly concerning the language and events recording of events that would occur at the stated time of the prophecy. Therefore, higher criticism also allows that some sections of the prophetic books (and even *Torah*) to be part of an earlier existing set of documents, later amended and redacted with later information so as to add to the legitimacy of the whole. Therefore, those who make these assumptions will look for the signs of redaction or splicing, and holding them up as irrefutable proof that the document as a whole cannot be authentic or original to the named author.

- E. Along with the rest of scripture, viewed through the lens of rationalism and bias against the supernatural, *Isaiah* becomes a difficult book to take at face value. The assumptions in the text itself require a belief that God was speaking to a people about events that were in the distant future, and also making longer-term prophecies about His ultimate solution to sin. This is incompatible with the model of seeing the prophets as moralistic teachers addressing only events that occurred, or were to soon come to pass, in the lives of their contemporaneous audience.
- i. The major arguments made against a single authorship of Isaiah who lived and prophesied during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1) are, therefore, not from the text itself, but from a set of *a priori* assumptions, to which the text is then molded.
 1. The early days (perhaps a misnomer, as we will see) of higher criticism of *Isaiah* separated the book into two distinct sections. Even more conservative scholars were swayed over time to accept the view that the first major portion of *Isaiah* dealing primarily with judgment (chapters 1-39) was distinct in time and authorship from the second that dealt with comfort (chapters 40-66). It was not long before that view evolved further as more doubt was cast on the unity of the book.
 2. Therefore, most modern scholars take the structure of the book having three distinct sections (1-39; 40-55; 56-66) as a demonstration of three writings by different authors at three times. The sections are often referred to as Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Trito-Isaiah, respectively. This is, in turn, a deviation from earlier concepts that there were two distinct books that were redacted in to what we have as the book called *Isaiah*.
 3. A second major argument against a unified authorship of *Isaiah* is that the situation of Isaiah would not be concerned with the exile into Babylon, as it was still nearly 100 years in the future, and even less likely is the idea that he would be concerned with the return from exile 70 years after that. The people of Judah to whom Isaiah would be speaking would benefit not at all from hearing about things that happened nearly two hundred years in the future.
 - a. This view of course discounts the entire concept of predictive prophecy that addresses truths many years, and even generations into the future. Abraham (Genesis 15:12-16, cf. Exodus 12:40-41), Joshua (Joshua 6:26, cf. I Kings 16:34), and Jeroboam (I Kings 13:2, cf. II Kings 23:15-16)

were all given prophecies that dealt with situations far into the future that did not affect their lives or the lives of those in their time. To dismiss the authenticity of *Isaiah* based on predictive prophecy is to dismiss the whole of scripture.

4. Perhaps the most bizarre and far-fetched “evidence” promoted as a sign of *Isaiah's* (or at least portions of *Isaiah's*) later authorship is the clear appeal to monotheism. (Isaiah 37:16, 20; 43:10; 44:24; 45:14, 18, 21) According to argument made by modern scholars, monotheism in Judah had not developed until after the Babylonian exile.¹
 - a. Since the entirety of scripture speaks of God's requirements for Israel to worship Him only, and their flirtations with polytheism are the major scourge that plagued the nation, it is perhaps unhelpful to address the number of ways this theory fails.
5. For additional insight into the arguments by major proponents of multiple authorship, see:
 - a. A. B. Davidson, (*The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Lippincott, 1903)
 - b. G.A. Smith (*The Expositor's Bible The Book of Isaiah Volumes I & II*, 1910)
 - c. C.C. Torey (*The Second Isaiah*, Edinburgh, 1928)
 - d. Bernhard Duhm (*Die Theologie der Propheten*, Bonn, 1875)
6. While form criticism is not a distinct study from higher criticism, it seeks a different path to the same goal. This study shares the assumption that the work of the prophet is not original to the author, but is the amalgamation of other documents, some of which may be the work of the author at hand.
 - a. Form criticism sees the development of literature much the same way that an evolutionary biologist may look at a species of animal. Never once would they assume that it was created to be the animal that it is, but they would look at the characteristics and compare them to other animals to try and theorize a path of genetic descent.

¹ Gnuse, Robert Karl, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, Continuum, 1997

- b. Similarly, form criticism sees the various words, phrases, and literature types and attempts to concoct a story for how the literature came to be. While this is useful for a great many forms of literature, it is somewhat dangerous when it comes to biblical writings, and prophecy in particular. It can be interesting to compare biblical writings to pagan or secular writings, but we must not assume their development was only a natural process. Prophecy is from God, and He may use whatever forms He desires, but the form of prophecy is not dictated by what humans have written previously.
- F. Moving on from the assumptions of those who would write about the prophet Isaiah, it is also necessary for us to examine the internal evidence that can be observed and considered.
- i. In the interest of our study, we can first consider evidence that might support multiple authorship of Isaiah.
 - 1. Those who assume that Isaiah is not the sole author of the book bearing his name will point to the appearance of Isaiah's name throughout the book. Of the 16 times the name itself appears in the book (1:1; 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2, 3; 37:2, 5, 6, 21; 38:1, 4, 21; 39:3, 5, 8), all of them appear before chapter 40, which is where the book is supposedly divided from Proto-Isaiah to Deutero-Isaiah.
 - 2. Another evidence cited for a later date of writing than Isaiah's time is the use of what can be called the "prophetic perfect." Many of the prophecies that Isaiah makes about the impending destruction of Israel and Judah are spoken of in the past tense. (Isaiah 5:13; 9:2; 11:9) Therefore, the claim is that writings from a later date are inserted along with the prophet's complaints about the moral state of the people as his time.
 - a. This use of language is not limited to *Isaiah*, however, and is noted by not a few biblical philologists and scholars. The use of the "prophetic perfect" in speaking of future things as if they had already occurred is well noted throughout Hebrew scripture.²

² Bruce Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN, 1990), p. 490. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, p. 518. E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910), pp. 312, 13.

3. As noted previously, there is a difference observed in the appearance of the name of the prophet in the earlier 39 chapters and the final 27. However, the overall character of the second part of the book differs in additional ways beyond just the name of the prophet. There are fewer historical references, and virtually no prose in the second part of the book (sometimes referred to as the “Book of Consolation”). Instead of Israel only being an object of wrath due to sin, there is hope and a future of Israel being God's perfect “servant.”
 - a. This is far from a compelling argument for multiple authorship, because it assumes that an author can only use one vernacular and can only address one purpose in a book. Furthermore, *Isaiah* uses by far the widest Hebrew vocabulary in the Hebrew Scriptures (2,186 different words), so to assume that a variety of language is proof of multiple authors is a significant leap of logic.
 - ii. Despite what many modern critics may say about *Isaiah*, there is much internal evidence that points toward a single authorship of the book.
 1. The Isaiah Scroll, also known as the Great Isaiah Scroll, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 contains a virtually complete copy of the book and has been dated to about 125 BC. The scroll is one unit with the end of chapter 39 and the beginning of chapter 40 in one continuous column of text. There is no indication whatsoever that the scribes ever considered the book to be anything but complete.
 - a. Similarly, there is nothing in the Septuagint (3rd-1st century BC) to indicate multiple authors or multiple sources. The book is treated as if complete and solely the work of the named prophet.
 2. Despite the characterization of *Isaiah* being, functionally, two books (or three) married together through clever redaction, there is an apparent unity of theme that runs throughout the book. The initial chapters that balance passages of judgment with promises of hope bear great similarities with the ending chapters that are filled with descriptions of destruction amidst promises of restoration.
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- a. “The wondrous unity which underlies the prophecy is one of the strongest arguments to show that there is purpose to the prophecy and that the work is best understood when regarded as a whole.” - Edward J. Young (*The Book of Isaiah Vol. 1*, Eerdmans p. 9, 1965)
3. From a language standpoint, despite so many accusations of the language being different from one section of *Isaiah* to another, there is a remarkable consistency. The peculiar phrase, “The Holy One of Israel” occurs in *Isaiah* 25 times out of the total 31 times in all of the *Old Testament*. It appears almost equally throughout the book, 12 times in the first 39 chapters, and 13 in the latter 27.
 - a. Consider the following: “...the prophet, as if with a presentiment that the authenticity of the second part of his book would be disputed, has stamped both parts with this name of God, ‘the Holy One of Israel,’ as if with his own seal.” - Luzzatto as quoted by Franz Delitzsch (*Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Clark, Edinburgh p. 193, 1873)
 - b. This phrase is a good example of the unity of language seen in the book, but is far from the only example. Zion, for example, appears 31 times in Isaiah 1-39 and 18 times in Isaiah 40-66. The words that develop thematic elements for the book are represented as equally as the themes themselves.
- iii. For believers, it is tempting to rely immediately on *New Testament* evidence, although critics will not share our basic assumptions about scripture. For this reason, I have left this portion until last, but failure to include it entirely would be perhaps foolish. The overall witness of the *New Testament* writers speaks to the unity of *Isaiah's* authorship with unmistakable clarity. Not only is Isaiah the only author given as responsible for the book we call by that name, but his name is attached equally to both major sections of the book.
 1. Matthew quotes extensively (3:3; 4:14-15; 8:17; 12:17-18; 13:14; 15:7-8) from the prophet, calling him Isaiah directly in reference to 6:9; 9:1; 29:13; 40:3; 42:1; 53:4. From the gospels, also consider Mark 1:2-3; 7:6; Luke 3:4; 4:16-19 (cf. Isaiah 60:1-2); John 1:23; 12:38-41 (cf. Isaiah 53:1).
 2. This is not a practice exclusive to the gospels, either. Luke writes in Acts 8:28-33; 28:25-27 that Isaiah is the author of both 53:7-8 and 6:9-10.
 3. Paul is very bold in his presentation of Isaiah as the author of several passages

from various parts of the book bearing his name. (Romans 9:27-29; 10:16-20; 15:12)

4. If modern scholarship has truly uncovered the truth about Isaiah's multiple authors, then it is a wonder that the Holy Spirit chose not to divulge such important information to the writers of the *New Testament*.
- G. External evidence for the authorship of *Isaiah* is scant precisely because few had even considered it a question, but assumed that it was the prophet whose name was given in the opening. That is not to say that there is not evidence that Isaiah's name has long been associated with the book, but no one felt the need to defend such an assumption, as the only criticism began in the latter half of the 19th century.
- i. Observe these quotes from scholars who wrote to question whether Isaiah was truly the author of the eponymous prophetic work:
 1. "For about twenty-five centuries no one dreamt of doubting that Isaiah the son of Amoz was the author of every part of the book that goes under his name; and those who still maintain the unity of authorship are accustomed to point, with satisfaction, to the unanimity of the Christian Church on the matter, till a few German scholars arose, about a century ago, and called in question the unity of this book." - Dr. A. B. Davidson, Professor of Hebrew in New College, Edinburgh, (*Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 244, 1903)
 2. "Till the end of the last century, it was almost universally accepted tradition, and even still is an opinion retained by some, that Isaiah was carried forward by the Spirit, out of his own age to the standpoint of one hundred and fifty years later; that he was inspired to utter the warning and comfort required by a generation of Jews so very different from his own, and was even enabled to hail by name the redeemer, Cyrus." - Rev. George Adam Smith, M.A. (*The Expositor's Bible The Book of Isaiah Volumes I & II* p. 167, 1910)
 - ii. If, for 25 centuries, there was no reason to attribute multiple authors to the great prophetic work that scripture unanimously attributes to the prophet Isaiah, then perhaps we should not try to invent one now.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Everything that we can see from scripture points us to Isaiah being the prophet God chose to deliver the message that is also recorded and attributed to him. There is always a connection

between the speaker and the message, and *Isaiah* is no different. The man who stood before kings to encourage them to trust in YHWH, also stood before a nation on the road to disaster. The prophet who warned of unavoidable doom, also promised unimaginable restoration.

II. Viewing Isaiah as God's chosen messenger is a matter of faith. Not only a faith in God's ability to speak accurately about events not yet come to pass, but also a faith in God's faithful protection of His messengers. Those who will reject God's values also reject those who proclaim them, but they are to speak nonetheless. It is God who judges who is truly a loyal servant.

III. We are the ones who are able to live in the promises Isaiah made over 25 centuries ago. We are the ones who returned and were healed. We can look at Isaiah's example and act in accordance with his faithful declarations. We are to be the ones who volunteer, "Here I am, send me."

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EndLesson2

Isaiah 7-11: God With Us

Jeff Smelser

Introduction:

- I. And Trypho answered, “The Scripture has not, ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,’ but, ‘Behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son,’ and so on, as you quoted. But the whole prophecy refers to Hezekiah, and it is proved that it was fulfilled in him, according to the terms of this prophecy. Moreover, in the fables of those who are called Greeks, it is written that Perseus was begotten of Danae, who was a virgin; he who was called among them Zeus having descended on her in the form of a golden shower. And you ought to feel ashamed when you make assertions similar to theirs, and rather [should] say that this Jesus was born man of men.”
(Justin Martyr, 67)
 - A. Trypho anticipated two major points of contention in the modern Is. 7:14 debate between theological liberals and theological conservatives:
 1. The meaning and translation of ‘*almah*’
 2. The allegation that a child divinely begotten by a virgin is a notion derived from pagan myths
- II. The question of an 8th century B.C. reference is often discussed in theologically polarized fashion, reflecting the threat that rationalism and higher criticism posed in the 19th century and continuing into the 20th century and the perception that the RSV with its translation of Is. 7:14 (“...Behold, a young woman shall conceive...”) was advancing the cause of unbelief.
 - A. “...the student who regards Is. 7:14 as a prophecy of the birth of Christ, finds in this passage Old Testament support for the doctrine of the virgin birth. But a student who sees no reference to the birth of Christ in Is. 7:14 will challenge the fact that *almah* means anything but a young woman.” (Sauer, 551)
 - B. “Basic to all the evangelical discussion of Isa 7:14 is the question, ‘Does the verse predict Jesus Christ?’ Liberalism tends to say no...” (Payne, 75).
 - C. E. J. Young contrasts the perspective of those “who regard the New Testament as divinely inspired” with those “who do not share such a high view of the New Testament,” saying the latter “have not regarded the Old Testament passage as a prophecy of the virgin birth of our Lord.” (Young, “The Immanuel Prophecy...II,” 98)
 - D. “The great and only difficulty lies in disbelief in predictive prophecy and in the almighty power of God; or in the desire to throw discredit upon the divine Sonship of Jesus.” (Wilson, 316)
 - E. Wilson’s assertion is essentially what Ira Rice charged in more colorful language, when he wrote of RSV translation committee member Harry M. Orlinsky, “...if he didn’t make a harlot out of Mary and a bastard out of our Lord Jesus Christ, please tell us what else!” (*Contending for the Faith*, Feb. 1978, as quoted by King, “A Plea for Sanity on Isaiah 7:14,” 666. Was it merely by chance that Dan’s article was

put on page 666?) To be sure, Orlinsky, a Hebrew Union professor, may have had just the perception of Mary and Jesus that Rice alleged. But that doesn't disprove the legitimacy of the RSV rendering.

- III. And yet many who acknowledge God's purpose to foretell the birth of Jesus in Is. 7:14 (i.e., conservatives) also see a possible reference to an 8th century B.C. mother and child. In the 19th century, these included J. A. Alexander, Albert Barnes, Milton Terry, and others, and in the 20th century, Gleason Archer, Walter Kaiser, William Sanford LaSor, John Oswalt, John Walton, Herbert Wolf and others. We might make special note of J.W. McGarvey who apparently belonged in this company (McGarvey 25f), and in light of the venue of this presentation, Robert Milligan, who believed that the child to be born to the virgin of Isaiah 7:14 was Maher-shalal-hash-baz, who was a type of the Christ. (Milligan, 115)
- IV. Discounting the pagan origin idea, we will only consider the significance of 'almah. Specifically, we are concerned with the following two questions:
- A. Does Is. 7:14 refer to an 8th century B.C. birth that would foreshadow Jesus' virgin birth, or does it refer exclusively to the birth of Jesus?
 1. There is no doubt that Jesus was born of a virgin (Mt. 1:20, 25; Lk. 1:34)
 2. There is no doubt that this was in fulfillment of prophecy (Mt. 1:23)
 3. There is no doubt that God could have explicitly foretold the virgin birth without doing so by means of a lesser birth that served as a foreshadow. (cf. Micah 5:2; Dan. 11; etc.)
 4. We only ask of what kind is this prophecy? Is it the kind we see in Micah 5:2, or is it the kind we see in 2 Sam. 7:12-16?
 - B. If there is an 8th century reference, who is the *'almah* and who is the child?

Body:

- I. The historical context
 - C. **The threat Ahaz faced from Israel.** Assyria had become a threat to Israel during the reign of Pekah (2 Kings 15:29). Meanwhile, in Judah, Ahaz was co-regent along with his father, Jotham, for a time before becoming sole ruler of Israel. In that general period of time, Pekah and Rezin became allies against Judah, sent by the Lord (2 Kings 15:37), as punishment for Ahaz's abominations (2 Chron. 28:1-6). Israel killed 120,000 of Judah in one day. And they carried away 200,000 to be slaves. But a prophet named Oded admonished the men of Israel, and consequently, the captives were released (2 Chron. 28:8-15). Then Ahaz was told that Syria was encamped in Ephraim, i.e., Syria had allied itself with Israel, and was perhaps physically in position to attack (Isaiah 7:1). Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, had conspired to defeat Judah and put "the son of Tabeel" on the throne (Is. 7:5).
 - D. **Isaiah's message.** Against this backdrop, probably in about 734 B.C., Isaiah, accompanied by his son Shear-Jashub ("a remnant will return") met Ahaz and told him he need not be fearful. Regarding the ominous threat from Israel and Syria, the Lord's assurance was "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass" (Is. 7:1-7). In short order the land of the two kings whom Ahaz feared would be forsaken (Is. 7:16) and within 65 years, Ephraim would be so shattered that it would no more be a people. But Ahaz was also told that if he did not believe, he would not last (Is. 7:9).

- E. **The sign.** Isaiah offered Ahaz a sign of Ahaz’s choosing, but Ahaz declined, unwilling to yield to the Lord’s will. Ahaz preferred to look to the Assyrians for help (2 Kings 16:7). Nonetheless, the Lord would give Ahaz a sign, but it would be one of the Lord’s choosing:
1. **Isa. 7:14-16:** “Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”
- F. **The ensuing events.** Tiglath-Pileser would indeed attack Syria and kill Rezin (733/732?):
1. “Tiglath pileser entered Damascus, executed Rezin its king, ravaged the city, and deported a large portion of its population. Then Tiglath-pileser organized the territory of the former state of Damascus into four Assyrian provinces. While his predecessors had been content to take tribute from conquered peoples, Tiglath-pileser adopted the policy of incorporating them into his empire. Among those who hastened to Damascus to pay tribute to Tiglath-pileser we meet the name Iauhazi of Judah, i.e. Jehoahaz, the fuller form of the Biblical name Ahaz.” (Pfeiffer, 334f)
 2. In 732, at the time of an Assyrian attack on Israel, Hoshea killed Pekah and became King in his place (2 Kings 15:29-30). Then in 722 B.C., twelve years from the time of Isaiah’s conversation with Ahaz, Israel would fall to the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:3-6). And about 669 B.C., 65 years after Isaiah’s conversation with Ahaz, King Esarhaddon of Assyria populated the land of Israel with foreigners (2 Kings 17:24ff, Ezra 4:2). But in turning to the Assyrians, Ahaz had invited trouble. They would also come and afflict Judah severely, as Isaiah had warned (Is. 7:17ff).

II. The Major Points at Issue

A simplistic presentation of major points at issue between those who see an exclusive reference to Jesus and those who see an initial reference to 8th century B.C. events. There are variations for each side.

	VIEWPOINT: Exclusive Reference to Jesus	VIEWPOINT: Initial reference to 8th century
The meaning of ‘<i>almah</i>’?	“young woman,” “maiden,” but in Is. 7:14, the young woman is necessarily a virgin	“young woman,” “maiden,” though possibly used of one who was in fact a virgin
The identity of ‘<i>almah</i> and her son’?	Mary/Jesus	various/various
The meaning of “sign”?	supernatural event	indication
How would it be a sign to Ahaz, or 8th century Judah?	assurance that his dynasty would survive, and the Messiah would come	deliverance would come within the timeframe of the child’s infancy/youth
The significance of “Immanuel”?	“ <i>God with us</i> ” = deity incarnate	“ <i>God with us</i> ” = God’s presence
The meaning of “your land”?	Immanuel owns the land	Immanuel lives in the land

A. The meaning of ‘*almah*’

1. As will become evident, there is not so much difference in the understanding of the word itself as one might suppose. The differences arise primarily when other than lexical factors are brought into view, e.g., what bearing Matthew's quotation has.
2. There are 8 occurrences in the OT other than Is. 7:14
 - a) Two are possibly technical terms in connection with music.
 - 1) 1 Chron. 15:20 "harps tuned to alamoth" (in accordance with maiden's voices, i.e., soprano? or by a choir of maidens?)
 - 2) Psalm 46:1 (*superscription* in English Bibles) "set to Alamoth" (in accordance with maiden's voices, i.e., soprano? or by a choir of maidens?)
 - b) The other occurrences of '*almah* are the following:
 - 1) **Gen. 24:43:** '*almah* is used of the girl who would be the answer to Eliezer's prayer, who had turned out to be Rebekah, who was in fact a virgin.
 - a) But we know that she was a virgin because she was described as a *bethulah* (24:16), and more especially because it is said, "no man had had relations with her" (24:16).
 - b) It is also worth noting that in verse 43 where Abraham's servant uses the word '*almah*, he is describing the words of his earlier prayer.
 - 1] The first account of that prayer (24:12-14) has the word *na'arah* (girl) where the second account has '*almah*.
 - 2] It would seem then that a stronger argument could be made from Gen. 24:43 for associating '*almah* with *na'arah* than with *bethulah*.
 - 2) **Ex. 2:8:** '*almah* is used of Miriam "so the girl went and called the child's mother."
 - 3) **Ps. 68:26** (**68:25** in English Bibles): "The singers went on, the musicians after them, in the midst of the maidens beating tambourines"
 - 4) **S. of Solomon 1:3:** "Your name is like purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you."
 - 5) **S. of Solomon 6:8:** "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number."
 - 6) **Prov. 30:19:** The entire section, verses 18-21, is:

*There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Four which I do not understand:
The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
and the way of a man with a maid;
This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,*

and says, “I have done no wrong.”

- a) This passage is much debated, and no consistent interpretation is offered on either side of the Is. 7:14 debate.
 - 1] Sauer says the passage speaks “of the unchastity of an unwed maiden” (553). Similarly, Young said the maid is not married, and allowed that she might be an “evil woman.” (“The Immanuel Prophecy...II,” 28).
 - 2] Hengstenberg thought the passage spoke of “young love” of a virgin, the kind that leads to marriage (419), and Hindson says she is “virtuous” and is a “virgin maid.”
 - 3] Machen supposes at least it is not clear that she was not a virgin (288, n. 6)
 - b) *‘almah* need mean nothing more than “young woman” here even if the context may suggest she is a virgin. Might not we convey precisely the same thought by saying in English, “the way of a man with a young woman,” wherein the phrase “young woman” itself says nothing of virginity even though the passage as a whole might indicate virginity?
3. *‘elem*, the masculine form of *‘almah*, does not indicate virginity.
- a) 1 Sam. 17:56 has Saul referring to David as *‘elem*, and the lad whom Jonathan would send to fetch the arrows as a signal to David was referred to as *‘elem* in 1 Sam. 20:22. “In neither of these cases is the sexual chastity of the individual a viable issue.” (Walton, 292)
 - b) Sauer supposes this does not “throw much light on the meaning of *‘almah*.” (553)
4. It is generally conceded that *‘almah* itself does not mean virgin.
- a) Dan King catalogued the treatment of *‘almah* in the various Hebrew lexicons and found “virgin” given as a meaning in only two of twelve.
 - 1) He further noted that in those, it was offered only as a secondary meaning.
 - 2) Moreover, those two were 19th century lexicons, and King discussed the reasons for the greater reliability of more recent lexicons. (King, “A Plea for Sanity...,” 668)
 - b) Delitzsch wrote, “It is also admitted that the idea of spotless virginity was not necessarily connected with *‘almâh* (as in Gen. xxiv. 43, cf. 16)...” (217)
 - c) Young wrote, “We are far from asserting that this word is the precise equivalent of the English ‘virgin’. It rather seems to be closer to words such as ‘damsel’ or ‘maiden’, words which most naturally suggest an unmarried girl.”
 - 1) However, in the very next paragraph, he wrote, “we believe that the meaning of the prophet is best brought out by the English word ‘virgin’.”
 - 2) Young’s primary concern was that the word clearly indicate that the woman was unmarried. That becomes clear in his continuing remarks: “Such a translation [virgin, JS] is far more accurate than the words ‘a young woman’. What is needed in a translation is some word which will definitely preclude any reference to a married woman.” (“The Immanuel Prophecy... II,” 35f)

- d) Hindson says, “All agree that it denotes a girl or young woman above the age of childhood who has arrived at sexual maturity,” and quotes Gray as saying “it asserts neither virginity nor the lack of it.”
- e) Counter to all the foregoing, Wolf, who sees an 8th century reference in Is. 7:14, nonetheless concludes that *‘almah* means virgin, this on the basis of the Ugaritic text 77, the poem describing the wedding of Nikkal and the Moon (see below). But he says, “This does not mean, however, that the mother was a virgin *at childbirth.*” (Wolf, 455) Wolf sees a wedding and consummation taking place in Is. 8:1-3. (See below)
5. It is generally conceded that *bethulah* comes closer to indicating virginity than does *‘almah*.
- a) Machen wrote, “It may readily be admitted that *‘almah* does not actually indicate virginity, as does *bethulah*; it means rather a young woman of marriageable age.” (288)
- b) Hindson admits, “The more commonly used word for virgin in the Old Testament is *bethulah*.”
- c) Young attempted to mitigate the impact of the point by suggesting that perhaps a “betrothed virgin” was permitted to have sexual relations with her intended, this primarily on the basis of Dt. 22:23-24 where the sexual infidelity of a betrothed virgin was punishable by death just as was the adultery of a married woman. Young also suggests the possibility of a married *bethulah* on the basis of Joel 1:8. (“The Immanuel Prophecy...II, 31ff)
- 1) He argued that *‘almah* is never used of a married woman.
 - a) It would be more accurate to say we might find it difficult to prove that any of those of whom the word is used were married. But it would also be impossible to prove some of them weren’t.
 - b) For Young’s case to stand, it is necessary that *‘almah* exclude the possibility of being married.
 - 2) Young noted that in both Gen. 24:16 and Jdg. 21:12, *bethulah* is accompanied by a phrase stating that the woman in view had not known a man, and argued that this is due to the ambiguity of *bethulah* itself.
 - 3) Young argued that all of the other terms that might have been used in Is. 7:14 either leave open the possibility that a very young girl, not of marriageable age, or that a betrothed girl, who perhaps was permitted to have sexual relations with her betrothed, or perhaps even a married woman was intended.
 - 4) Therefore, he concludes, *‘almah* is used because it is the only word that would not suggest these ideas and would clearly indicate an unmarried woman. (“The Immanuel Prophecy...II,” 30-35)
- d) Similarly, Alexander (who allowed the possibility of an 8th century reference in Is. 7:14) supposed the *bethulah* was not always used “in its strict sense” of virgin, this based on Dt. 22:19, and on Joel 1:8 where he apparently understood it to be used of a married woman.
- 1) Therefore he surmised that had Isaiah used the word *bethulah*, “there would still have been room for the same cavils.”

- 2) He concludes, “it is enough for us to know that a virgin **or unmarried woman** [emph. mine, JS] is designated here as distinctly as she could be by a single word.” (Alexander, 168)
- e) This reasoning that *bethulah* was perhaps somewhat ambiguous and therefore ‘*almah* was used instead in order to clearly indicated “unmarried woman” falls short of affirming that ‘*almah* means virgin. If it provides some evidence that *bethulah* might not always unequivocally mean virgin, it does not make ‘*almah* equal to virgin. The argument that *bethulah* was unsuitable for Isaiah’s announcement was merely a response to the argument that if “virgin” had been intended, *bethulah* would have been used. Young made no effort to suggest that ‘*almah* itself means virgin, and in fact affirmed that it does not. Young only aimed to leave the door open for the *context* to provide a basis for translating ‘*almah* as virgin.
6. But it is said ‘*almah* never “excludes the idea of virginity,” a negative argument that falls short of what is needed. And yet it is the strongest lexical argument that can be made in the attempt to associate the Hebrew ‘*almah* with virginity.
- a) Melvin Curry quotes Bruce Vawter as saying, “if *almah* the feminine of the rare *elem*, youth, does not etymologically mean anything more than a young woman, and if *bethulah* is the specific word for virgin, the commentators have correctly pointed out that nowhere in the OT is *almah* used in a way that certainly excludes the idea of virginity.” (Vawter, “The Ugaritic Use of GLMT,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 14 (1952): 319, as quoted by Curry, “Plea For Sanity... (Part II),” 674)
- b) Machen wrote: ‘there is no place among the seven occurrences of ‘*almah* in the Old Testament where the word is clearly used of a woman who was not a virgin.’ (288)
- c) But absent an unequivocal affirmation of virginity, it is the fact of giving birth that excludes virginity. To indicate that a woman who gives birth is a virgin, an expression that *necessitates* virginity is required.
- d) “In English a fiancée is often also a virgin (though the percent of semantic overlapping of these two words is in sad decline). That does not mean that the word ‘fiancée’ means ‘virgin.’ Someone could show me a thousand passages where ‘fiancée’ was used to refer to a virgin, but that would not change the meaning.” (Walton, 292)
7. Especially in the 20th century, after the discovery of a corpus of Ugaritic literature, evidence from cognate languages has been cited in discussions of the meaning of ‘*almah*. I’m in over my head just talking about the Hebrew, and therefore in considering the evidence from other Semitic languages, I’m going to do nothing more than call attention to some of the documents and relevant discussions so that you can examine them yourselves.
- a) **Ugaritic** On the close relationship between Ugaritic and Hebrew, see *Ugarit and the Old Testament*, by Peter C. Craige. Relative to ‘*almah*, two documents are thought to be important:
- 1) *The Legend of King Keret*
- a) *glmt*, the Ugaritic equivalent of the Hebrew ‘*almah*, is used twice with reference to Hurriya, the daughter of King Pebel, whom King Keret seeks as a wife.

- b) See Wolf, p. 450; also Walton, p. 292f, and Young, “The Immanuel Prophecy, Isaiah -7:14-16,” (May 1953) p. 123.
- 2) *The Wedding of Nikkal and the Moon*
- a) In this poem, the word *glmt* is again used, but here it is used in parallel fashion to *blt*, the Ugaritic equivalent of *bethulah* (“virgin”). In both instances, the reference is to Nikkal, a lunar goddess who will marry Yarih, the Moon god, and will conceive.
- b) An English translation of the poem is found in *Ugaritic Literature, A Comprehensive Translations of the Poetic and Prose Texts*, by Cyrus H. Gordon.
- c) See also Gordon’s article “‘Almah in Isaiah 7:14” p. 106, Young, “The Immanuel Prophecy, Isaiah -7:14-16” pp. 120-122, Young, *The Book of Isaiah* p. 287, Walton p. 292f, Wolf p. 450.
- b) For discussion of Arabic and Syriac cognates, see Sauer, p. 554f.
8. It is argued that because the Septuagint rendering of ‘*almah* in Is. 7:14 is *parthenos*, we must conclude the meaning of ‘*almah* is virgin.
- a) But even *parthenos* does not always indicate virginity.
- 1) According to LSJ, *parthenos* may be translated *maiden, girl*, and is used of “unmarried women who are not virgins” as well as of virgins. (*Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 9th edition revised and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with a revised supplement, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
 - 2) According to BDAG, *parthenos* is used “gener. of a young woman of marriageable age, w. or without focus on virginity,” although in the New Testament and “other early Christian literature” it is said to be used of “one who has never engaged in sexual intercourse,” and the glosses offered are “*virgin, chaste person.*” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
 - 3) In Pindar’s Pythian Odes, Coronis, who is pregnant by Apollo and has incited his jealousy by infidelity with Ischys, is referred to as a *parthenos*
 - 4) In the Septuagint rendering of Gen. 34:3, *parthenos* is twice used of Dinah who was no longer a virgin.
 - 5) An analogy can help us understand how *parthenos* could sometimes be used not merely to refer to someone who happens to be a virgin but to actually mean virgin and yet at other times might not mean virgin at all. Consider the usage of *boy* or *girl* in certain contexts. Setting aside the loose morality that often lies behind such usage, we sometimes hear that “a *girl* becomes a woman” or “a *boy* becomes a man” in a context where the change of status is by means of a first sexual experience. In such contexts, the term *boy* or *girl* necessarily includes the idea of virginity. But that doesn’t prevent us from using the terms *boy* and *girl* in other contexts with no reference to the lack of sexual experience.
 - a) That is not to say *parthenos* is generally equivalent to *girl*, nor to suggest *parthenos* is as weak a reference to virginity as *girl* generally is.

- b) It is only meant to illustrate that the word could itself necessarily indicate virginity in one context, and yet not necessarily indicate virginity in another.
- b) My own thinking is that the Septuagint translation reflects a supposition that a virgin was in view, but not necessarily a supposition she would still be a virgin at the time of the birth. The Septuagint uses future tense verbs, “will conceive” (*en gastri hexei; v.l. lēmpsetai*), “will bear” (*texetai*) and therefore the thought could easily have been that the prophet envisioned a virgin who would marry and conceive naturally.
- c) So then, because of the flexibility of the word *parthenos*, the Septuagint translation of *‘almah* at Is. 7:14 does not offer certain proof that the woman was understood to be a virgin. Because of the future tense verbs, there is no reason to suppose the translation presumes a virgin birth. And in any event, the Septuagint translation certainly does not prove that *‘almah* itself means *virgin*.
9. Some suppose the quotation in Mt. 1:23 determines the meaning of *‘almah* in Is. 7:14.
- a) **“Exclusive Reference to Jesus” Viewpoint** (Those who believe Is. 7:14 refers exclusively to Jesus are represented herein by Delitzsch, Hindson, Machen, Moriarty, Payne, Raymond, Sauer(?), Wilson, and Young.)
- 1) With reference to Matthew’s citation of Is. 7:14, Payne says “it simply is not right to use a verse that is not about a virgin birth to substantiate a virgin birth.” (Payne, 77)
- a) I would say Matthew is not citing Is. 7:14 so much to substantiate a virgin birth as to reveal that the virgin birth which he otherwise substantiates was prophesied in the O.T.
- b) Moreover, I would not say Is. 7:4 is not about a virgin birth any more than I would say 2 Sam. 7:12-16 is not about Jesus. The virgin birth may not have been the *immediate* application of Is. 7:14, but certainly the Lord had the virgin birth in mind as the ultimate application.
- 2) On the other hand, Payne himself acknowledges that “the formula in Matt 1:22, ‘that it might be fulfilled,’ need not in itself imply anything more than a verbal allusion and does not require Isa 7:14 to have been directed toward Jesus.” (*Ibid.*)
- a) In answer to the question, “Does Matt 1:23’s formula of citation require Isa 7:14 to foretell Jesus?” Payne responds, “the answer appears to be no.” (However, he offers this question as an example of what he considers “wrong questions.”) (*Ibid.*)
- b) Payne cites Mt. 2:15 and Mt. 2:17 “which merely provide new applications for the thoughts and phraseology of Hos 1:11 and Jer 31:15.” (*Ibid.*)
- c) Payne’s primary concern seems to be that whatever Matthew meant by virgin had to be the meaning in Is. 7:14 else Matthew’s credibility suffers. But if Matthew’s use of Isaiah 7:14 necessitates that the Isaiah passage was a reference to a virgin, how is it that Payne thinks Mt. 1:23 could allow the possibility that Is. 7:14 wasn’t directed toward Jesus?

- b) **“Initial 8th Century Reference” Viewpoint.** Among those who see a possible reference to an 8th century B.C. mother and child, there is a variety of explanations concerning the relationship between such OT/NT counterparts as Is. 7:14 and Mt. 1:23. These include but are not limited to the following:
- 1) **double fulfillment** - According to Walton, in this hermeneutic, it is supposed that “there is a contemporary intention that can be identified exegetically and a far-off fulfillment that is assumed to have been intended because of the NT usage.” In Walton’s categorization, this view assumes “the OT authors intended that meaning.” i.e., the meaning recognized by the NT authors. (Walton, 302)
 - a) Milton S. Terry said admitting double fulfillment would “unsettle all scientific interpretation.” (Terry, 491)
 - b) Yet he himself allowed that “It is not impossible, however, that such an event occurred in the days of Ahaz, and served, in its way, as a type of the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary.” Nonetheless, he insisted, “upon this supposition the language of the passage would have no double sense, and its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus would be like the fulfilment of Hosea xi, 1 in the return of the child Jesus out of Egypt.” (*Ibid.*, 494f, n. 3.)
 - c) For Terry, “in the case of types the language of the Scripture has no double sense. The types themselves are such because they prefigure things to come, and this fact must be kept distinct from the question of the sense of language used in any particular passage.” (*Ibid.*, 494)
 - 2) **sensus plenior** - Walton says “many who believe in *sensus plenior*” see “the NT meaning as allowable if it was one that was divinely intended even though the human author of the OT knew nothing of it.” (*Ibid.*)
 - a) Walton notes, “The difficulty here is that one must assume that God is engaging in a large program of subtle and sophisticated double entendre. Many find it difficult to think that God was deliberately concealing a portion of the inspired message to unveil it at a later date.” (*Ibid.*)
 - b) But is not what Walton supposes many find difficult to believe exactly what is affirmed in 1 Pt. 1:10-12; Rom. 15:25; and Eph. 3:5? And moreover, isn’t “subtle and sophisticated double entendre” an apt description of such passages as Hos. 11:1; Gen. 22:1-18; Psalm 22; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; etc.?
 - c) For a negative critique of *sensus plenior*, see Kaiser.
 - 1] Kaiser says “Bruce Vawter brilliantly slammed the door on **sensus plenior**.” (Kaiser, 58) Vawter’s point via Kaiser can be summarized as follows: Scripture is the product of God through human instrumentality, so that if man is ignorant of the meaning of what he writes, any truly *human* instrumentality has effectively been eliminated and therefore the result is not scripture. (Kaiser 59) This seems to me to put an arbitrary and artificial meaning on “instrumentality.”
 - 2] Kaiser himself goes on to insist that “all mechanical or totally passive ideas of revelation are certainly excluded” by 1 Cor. 2:6-16,

particularly because “Paul chose to use the word ‘taught’ (**didaktos**)” in vs. 13. (*Ibid.*, 60)

- 3] While we are hard pressed to defend the notion that all scripture involved only “mechanical or totally passive” activities on the part of the human author (e.g., Lk. 1:3; 1 Cor. 7:6-7, 40), is it not clear that prophets, both Old Testament and New, did on occasion write or speak things they themselves did not understand? (1 Pt. 1:10-12; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 14:27-28; Jn. 11:49-51)
- 3) **name model** - This is the model Walton himself suggests.
- a) He looks to names given at birth that later prove to have been predictive, and argues that they were expected so to be. He mentions “Jacob” in particular (Gen. 27:36).
 - b) In this he sees a paradigm for understanding prophecies.
 - 1] As with names, he supposes “the prophetic word, whether of a predictive nature or not, was expected to have an appropriateness that would only be unfolded as history took place,” but that “the prophet could not begin to anticipate specifically or even generally what form the appropriateness would take.”
 - 2] So then he supposes that Isaiah would have expected that his reference to a child named “God with us” “might eventually take on other appropriateness.” But he supposes “even Matthew would have believed that Isaiah would be astounded at the way that his prophetic words were proving appropriate” (Walton, 299f)
- 4) **generic prediction** - This is advocated by Kaiser who borrows the designation from Willis J. Beecher. Kaiser quotes Beecher, “A generic prediction is one which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts, separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole -- in other words, a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of its parts.”
- a) So, while denying that he is arguing for “a double sense or multiple meaning,” and while scoffing at *sensus plenior*, Kaiser supposes Is. 7:14 has reference to the birth of Hezekiah as well as the birth of Jesus.
 - b) He believes seeing Hezekiah and Jesus in Isaiah 7:14 is in keeping with the single-meaning hermeneutic inasmuch as “both share enough distinctive common elements so that a single sense and meaning links them....In this case, the most essential common feature shared is that both Hezekiah and Messiah were from ‘the House of David’ which God had promised would never perish.” (Kaiser, 67)
- 5) For my part, I would say God certainly had in mind the birth of a Messiah *to a virgin*, Isaiah probably didn’t fully comprehend that, and in any case there was an 8th century B.C. birth in view which was to foreshadow the birth of the Messiah, but that as the theme is developed through chapter 11, the language and focus turns more and more pointedly to the Messiah himself rather than to the 8th century child who would foreshadow him.

B. The identity of *‘almah* and her son?

1. **“Exclusive Reference to Jesus” Viewpoint** Of course those of this viewpoint see only Mary as the *‘almah*, and only Jesus as the son.
2. **“Initial 8th Century Reference” Viewpoint** A number of identifications have been suggested by those of this viewpoint, including the following:
 - a) Some suppose Is. 7:4 refers collectively to many young women who would bear sons at this time (Koehler in “Zum Verständnis von Jes 7,14,” ZAW 67 (55) 48-50, according to Moriarty, 231)
 - b) Some have suggested the woman is an unspecified wife or concubine of Ahaz.
 - c) Some suppose the young woman is Abi, the daughter of Zechariah, wife of Ahaz and mother of Hezekiah (2 Ki. 18:2).
 - 1) Though the chronology is difficult to establish with certainty, as early as Jerome it has been recognized that there is a chronological difficulty that seems to preclude the identification of Hezekiah with the child.
 - 2) 2 Kings 18:1-2 tells us Hezekiah came to the throne at age 25. 2 Kings 16:1-2 tells us Ahaz reigned 16 years beginning at age 20, which would make him 35 or 36 when he dies and Hezekiah takes his place.
 - a) But if Hezekiah was 25 when his father Ahaz was 36 (at most), then Hezekiah was born when his father was 11 at most.
 - b) Moreover, this would mean Hezekiah was born well before the prophecy which supposedly foretells his birth.
 - 3) Kaiser favors Hezekiah as the identity of the one who would serve as a sign to Ahaz’s generation “while also embodying the wonderful names of that coming Davidic prince.” While acknowledging the chronological problem, he anticipates “new discoveries” that will help refine the chronology and solve the problem. (Kaiser, 64ff)
 - d) Contextually, I think the strongest case can be made for the prophetess, and the child is Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.
 - 1) Oswalt favors this identification. (213)
 - 2) Milligan sees the name as a comforting assurance. “This name, it seems, was given to the first born son of Isaiah by a second wife, to indicate that God was still among his people for their protection and deliverance (Is. 7:13-16). And as evidence of this, Isaiah was directed to announce the speedy fall of the two kings, Rezin and Pekah, who were then threatening to overthrow Jerusalem. ‘Before the child [Immanuel],’ said God by the Prophet, ‘shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.’ (Isa. 7:16.) And in order to impress this matter still more deeply on the minds and hearts of the people, God further instructed Isaiah to call the same child *Maharshalal-Hashbaz*, *Haste-to-the-spoil--Speed-to-the-prey*: indicating by this name that in a very short time, even ‘before the child should know to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria would be taken away by the king of Assyria.’ (Isa. 8:1-4)” (Milligan, 115)

- 3) Wolf sees the name as evoking the coming judgment: “Hence, ‘Immanuel’ expresses the promise aspect of the sign, whereas ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ relates more to its judgmental side. (Wolf, 454f)
- 4) Payne discounts this possibility saying, “nothing suggests that Isaiah’s allegedly ‘earlier’ wife suffered death or displacement.” (79)
 - a) But why must we presume Isaiah’s wife, the mother of Shear Jashub, had died?
 - b) Could not the Lord have instructed Isaiah to take a second wife? (cf. 2 Sam. 12:8.)
- 5) Payne also seems to think it unlikely that Isaiah could have married a woman in the interval between Is. 7:25 and Is. 8:1.
 - a) But couldn’t Is. 8:3 be the account of his taking her to wife? We need not think of an elaborate wedding. Cf. Gen. 24:67.
 - b) On the other hand, Wolf thinks he sees evidence of a ceremony in the text.
 - 1] Wolf finds a close verbal parallel to “getting witnesses”(8:2) in Jer. 32:10, where the context mentions two copies of a deed, one sealed and one open.
 - 2] He notes that the tablet (*glywn*) of Is. 8:1 has a root in common with the “open deed” of Jer. 32:11.
 - 3] Based on the use in Est. 3:14 and 8:13 of the cognate verb for publishing a decree, he finds further evidence that *glywn* “refers to a published official document of some sort.”
 - 4] Wolf sees in the sealed copy of the deed in Jer. 32 a possible counterpart to the binding of the testimony and sealing of law in Is. 8:16.
 - 5] “Baruch was asked by Jeremiah to keep the purchase deeds in an earthen vessel (Jer 32:14). Likewise Isaiah request that his disciples (vs. 16) preserve what may have been the marriage deed with the key reference to the symbolic name of his son.” (452)
 - 6] Wolf notes the use of *t’wdh* (“attestation,” NAS: “testimony”) in Is. 8:16 and 8:20 and compares its only other occurrence in the OT, Ruth 4:7. There, the removal and handing over of a sandal was a “testimony.” In that particular instance, the transaction was the handing over of the right/responsibility to take Ruth as a wife. Wolf asks, “Is it not likely that a similar legal transaction is in view in both chapters?” (*Ibid.*)
 - 7] In Mal. 2:14, Wolf sees the ideas of witness to a legal transaction (a covenant) and a marriage coming together: “A marriage is a covenant, and the Lord himself is said in Malachi to be a witness to the marriage of individuals.” (*Ibid.*) He also sees evidence for marriage as a covenant in Ezek. 16:8 and for witnesses to a marriage in Gen. 24:50.

- 8] Wolf brings other evidence to bear, but in the end, the picture he suggests is a wedding ceremony involving two documents, one sealed and one open for ready reference, just as would be the case in other legal transactions. The open document, which might have been either a duplicate of the sealed document or a summary of the sealed document, is perhaps titled, “to/for/concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (thus explaining the prefixed *lamed* which functions as an inseparable preposition meaning “to” or “for”) and emphasizes “the fact that this marriage will not be childless, in line with the prediction of 7:14.” The document would include information about the bride-price that was paid. One of the witnesses was Uriah the priest, which Wolf suggests would not have been “at all inappropriate for the union of a well-known prophet and prophetess.” The marriage ceremony in verses 1-2 is followed by the consummation of the marriage in verse 3.
- c) Wolf’s work is interesting, but I think perhaps he has made more of some of the evidence he cites than is warranted, and has built a case for a sort of ceremony that goes beyond what we know about weddings in Israelite culture.
- 6) Specifically, my reasons for favoring this identification are as follows:
- a) **The close connection in the text.** Isaiah’s message to Ahaz continues through the end of chapter 7. Immediately thereafter, the Lord tells Isaiah to write on a table, “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (swift is the booty, speedy is the prey”), this being the very name that the LORD will tell Isaiah to give to his child. Then verse 3 says, “So I approached the prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son.”
 - b) **The similar references to the fall of Syria and Israel in terms of the child’s infancy or youth.** The Lord speaks of the son in a manner similar to the prophecy of Is. 7:15, “before the boy knows how to cry out ‘My father,’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.
 - c) **The association of the name “Immanuel: with the child.** The words of Is. 8:5-8 are closely connected with Maher-Shalal-hash-baz inasmuch as they develop the meaning of his name, the speedy judgment coming by means of the Assyrians (cf. Is. 10:5ff). But in this section, so closely connected with the Maher-Shalal-hash-baz, the name used for the one addressed is Immanuel (8:8). The Lord describes not only the Assyrians’ devastation of Syria and Israel, but also their advance on into Judah, described as “thy land O Immanuel,” using the name of the child as given in Is. 7. Immanuel and Maher-Shalal-hash-baz are one and the same, one name indicating the favorable aspect of God’s presence, and the other God’s coming judgment. See Wolf, who advocates this view.
 - d) **Isaiah said his sons were signs.** Chapter 7:14 tells us the birth of a son was to be part of a sign, and chapter 8 tells us of the birth of a son to Isaiah, and Isaiah says, “I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonder in Israel...”

C. The meaning of “sign”?

1. “Exclusive Reference to Jesus” Viewpoint

- a) “An ordinary birth can hardly be said to constitute a sign, but an unusual birth, if the mother is not a married woman, would, provided the woman were a good woman, indeed be a sign.” (Young, “The Immanuel Prophecy...,” 36)
- b) “The truth is that all these interpretations which find in the child-bearing of the *‘almah* only an ordinary birth are opposed by the way in which the promise is introduced. Why should an ordinary birth be regarded as a “sign”? That word naturally leads us to think of some event like the turning back of the sun on Hezekiah’s dial, or the phenomena in connection with Gideon’s fleece.” (Machen, 290f)
- c) Of course we can suppose Young and Machen and commentators in general are aware that in and of itself, the word translated *sign* requires no more than an indication of some sort, whether natural or supernatural. E.g., Sauer admits, “The word *oth* itself does not indicate whether a miraculous element is involved in it or not. It is used of natural signs, and it is used of miraculous signs.” (556)
- d) But the argument is generally made that this particular context requires something supernatural. After describing various interpretations that see a reference only to “the birth and infancy of a child born...in the ordinary course of nature,” Alexander said, “A further objection...is, that although they may afford a *sign*, in one of the senses of that term..., they do not afford such a sign as the context would lead us to expect.” (Alexander, 167) The factors often thought to call for some extraordinary sign are the following:
 - 1) The offer to Ahaz of a sign as “deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” (Alexander, Payne, Sauer)
 - 2) The use of the word “Behold” in designating the sign. (Sauer)

2. “Initial 8th Century Reference” Viewpoint

- a) The sign need not have been anything more than the occurrence of stipulated events whereby it would become evident that God’s word would be or had been accomplished. Compare Ex. 3:11-12 and Is. 37:30ff (=2 Kings 19:29ff).
- b) Among the signs promised to Saul were the fact that he would be told his father’s donkeys had been found, and that he would meet three men going up to Bethel, “one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and other carrying a jug of wine.” They would give him two loaves of bread. He would also meet some musical prophets who would be prophesying, and the Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul himself so that he would prophesy (1 Sam. 10:1-7). Some of these things are mundane events that would serve as signs merely because they would be precisely what had been foretold, though there was nothing extraordinary about the events in and of themselves.
- c) In 1 Sam. 2:34 the sign of the judgment on Eli’s house was the death of both of his sons on the same day, and in Jer. 44:29-30 the sign of the destruction of the Jews in Egypt would be that Hophra, “the benefactor of the defecting Israelites,” would be given over to his enemies. (Walton, 294)
- d) Luke 2:11-12 “there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in a swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

- e) In several of these, “the sign serves as an indicator that the fulfillment is under way.” (*Ibid.*)
- f) Isaiah says, “I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts”

D. How it would be a sign to Ahaz, or 8th century Judah?

1. **“Exclusive Reference to Jesus” Viewpoint** The means of explaining how the birth and attendant circumstances would be a sign vary widely among those who see Is. 7:14 as referring exclusively to Jesus.
 - a) Some of those who suppose Is. 7:14 refers only to the birth of the Messiah have supposed that vs. 16 refers to some contemporary child (according to Alexander: Junias, Usher, Calvin). Among these, some take vs. 15 to refer to the child of verse 14, and others take vs. 15 to refer to the child of verse 16. But Alexander remarks, “A *child* is born -- *he* learns to distinguish good and evil -- but before *the child* is able to distinguish good and evil, something happens. If these three clauses, thus succeeding one another, do not speak of the same child, it is impossible for language to be so employed as to identify the subject without actually saying that it is the same.” (175)
 - b) Alexander mentions some others (Michaelis and Henderson) who supposed the political events under consideration were in fact accomplished in the first century during the childhood of Jesus. (170)
 - c) Some aptly note that Isaiah alters his speech from addressing Ahaz in the singular (vs. 11) to addressing the house of David (vs. 13, so Moriarty) and an audience addressed in the plural (vs. 14, so Young). Though they don’t overly stress the point, it suggests a lessened need to explain how the sign was relevant in the 8th century, particularly to Ahaz.
 - d) Reymond offers a bold explanation, making the remoteness and uncertain time frame an enhancement of the sign. The time lapse until the fulfillment of prophecy “need not diminish the contemporary relevance to Isaiah’s warning” just as “the Lord’s second coming should motivate our faithful conduct, no matter how distant it may be.” (Payne, quoted by Reymond, 11) In fact, Payne argues that just as our not knowing when the Lord will return should be added incentive, so also the prophecy could serve as a motivator “provided only that the contemporary audience does not know when this fulfillment is to take place.” (Payne, via Reymond, 11)
 - 1) I think Reymond and Payne have confused promise with sign.
 - 2) What Ahaz was given was not merely a promise nor merely a threat intended to motivate, but a sign intended to confirm.
 - e) Similar in its attempt to turn the difficulty to an advantage is another explanation described by Alexander: “the assurance that Christ was to be born in Judah, of its royal family, might be a sign to Ahaz, that the kingdom should not perish in his day; and so far was the remoteness of the sign in this case from making it absurd or inappropriate, that the further off it was, the stronger the promise of continuance to Judah, which it guaranteed. Especially is this the case, if we suppose it to have been a familiar doctrine of the ancient Church, that the Messiah was to come, and that for his sake, Israel existed as a nation” (171)

- f) Some suppose the time span of Jesus' childhood is set forth as a representation of the time, as equivalent to the time, that remained until the abandonment of Israel and Syria.
- 1) For example, according to Alexander, Vitranga supposed "the Prophet, while he views the birth of Christ as a remote event, makes it the measure of the events at hand--*q.d.* before the Messiah, *if he were born now*, could know how to distinguish good from evil, &c." For his part, Alexander responds, "The only objection to this ingenious explanation is, that the conditional expression on which all depends, *if he were born now*, is precisely that which is omitted, and of which the text contains no intimation." (Alexander, 171)
 - 2) "[the promises pertaining to the Messianic hope] should have been close to the thought of the royal house which took so prominent a part in the liturgical celebration of the covenant made with the Davidic dynasty." (Moriarty, 233)
- g) Moriarty suggests the possibility that the poem of Nikkal and the Moon might give evidence that an extraordinary royal birth could have been on people's minds in ancient times. "The discovery of the striking Ugaritic parallel to 7,14 in the NKL poem (text 77,7 in Gordon) also warns us against assuming that the idea of an extraordinary royal birth was unknown in the ancient East" (Moriarty, 233) Moriarty's thought is that to a people in high expectation of a coming Messiah, a further prediction that he would come might indeed serve to give them confidence they would get through the present troubles.
- h) Notice that several of these explanations of how the promised birth would be a sign to Ahaz are at odds with the insistence that a sign be something extraordinary: It is said that an ordinary birth would not be a sign because something humanly inexplicable was required, but the sign to Ahaz was nothing more than an ordinary assertion inasmuch as he would not live to see its accomplishment.
2. **"Initial 8th Century Reference" Viewpoint** The context pertains to Ahaz' fear of Israel and Syria, who have allied themselves together against Judah (7:1ff) with the aim of deposing Ahaz and replacing him with the son of Tabeel. (7:6) The Lord's message is that it won't happen (7:7). The sign is intended to confirm this.
- a) If the promise of a future Messiah were a sign that Judah could not be conquered by Syria and Israel (because Judah of necessity must yet exist for the Messiah to come), it would be a sign that Judah would not be conquered by anyone at all.
 - 1) And yet of course, eventually (but before the Messiah came) Judah was conquered and even devastated.
 - 2) Nonetheless, the Messiah came, and thus it becomes obvious the assurance of the Messiah's coming in no way assured the safety of Judah from any given desolation.
 - b) Similarly, if the promise of a future Messiah were a sign that the line of David could not be interrupted while Ahaz was on the throne (because the line of David must remain intact for the Messiah to come), why wouldn't it be a sign that the line of David would not be interrupted during the reign of Ahaz's successors?
 - 1) And yet of course, eventually the line of David was interrupted.

- 2) Nonetheless, the Messiah came, and thus it becomes obvious that the assurance of the Messiah's coming in no way assured Ahaz's continued rule.
- c) But Walton's suggestion that "the sign serves as an indicator that the fulfillment is under way" works well. When Ahaz saw the events coming about as predicted in Is. 7:14-15, he would know that the time of the promised deliverance was at hand. The connection of the lands of Syria and Israel being forsaken with the child being old enough to refuse evil and choose good points to the actual childhood of Immanuel and its coinciding with the period of time until Judah's enemies are brought low.

E. The significance of "Immanuel"?

1. "Exclusive Reference to Jesus" Viewpoint

- a) Supposing he has established that a virgin birth is unambiguously indicated in Is. 7:14, Raymond argues that a child so born would necessarily be "unique" and says, "It does not do justice to the child's uniqueness among men as *virginally conceived* to argue...that the name Immanuel was intended merely to symbolize the fact that God was present with the nation in her coming deliverance and nothing more....but a *virginally-conceived* child who would bear the name "Immanuel"...might well *be* in fact what his name suggests." (Raymond, 7)
- b) Payne argues that Immanuel is not merely providential, ("God's help will be with us") but is incarnational based on Matthew's citation and also based on "Isaiah's violent condemnation of Ahaz." Payne explains, "The king's disbelief...comports badly with any promise of alleged immediate providential consolation." (Payne, 81)

2. "Initial 8th Century Reference" Viewpoint

- a) "Perhaps the most attractive option is that Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz were one and the same. If this were so, this passage [8:8] would form a more poetic statement of the child's identity, pointing to the ultimate Immanuel, whereas 8:1-4 would constitute a more prosaic account and be limited merely to the person of Maher-shalal-hash-baz." (Oswalt, 213)
- b) Wolf asks, "If the child of Isaiah and the propheticess fulfilled the prophecy of Immanuel, why did Isaiah name the same child Maher-shalal-hash-baz?" After noting that Immanuel is viewed as being "on the scene" once Maher-shalal-hash-baz is born" and seeing this as evidence for identifying the two as the same, Wolf continues, "Hence, 'Immanuel' expresses the promise aspect of the sign, whereas 'Maher-shalal-hash-baz' relates more to its judgmental side. The question whether 7:14-15 denotes promise or judgment has sharply divided commentators, but both deliverance and defeat must be in the picture." (Wolf, 454f)
- c) But if Maher-shalal-hash-baz was a sign of God's care for his people, he was only a glimmer of what would be 700 years later, when Immanuel would actually be "God with us."

F. The meaning of "your land"? (8:8)

1. "Exclusive Reference to Jesus" Viewpoint

- a) "...would Isaiah have named the land after one of his own sons or after some hypothetical person? There is a seriousness in the passage that is overlooked

by those who refuse to accept the Messianic reference.” (Young, *The Book of Isaiah* 307, n. 18)

- b) “The fact that the newborn son who is called Immanuel in 7:14 seems to have the Palestinian area named after him, as “lord of the whole land of Israel (8:8), does correspond to the proclamation that the child called *ēl gibbôr*, “Mighty God,” in 9:6 has no end to the increase of his government on the throne of David (9:7).” (Payne, 75)

2. “Initial 8th Century Reference” Viewpoint

- a) Consider Isaiah’s own name, related to “Joshua”/“Jesus” and meaning “Jehovah saves” or “Jehovah is salvation.” Do we lack appreciation for the seriousness of the text if we suppose references to Isaiah are in fact references to an 8th century B.C. man?
- b) Like so many people and events that foreshadow the Christ, the application to the Christ is so much more compelling than the original manifestation, which was, after all, only a shadow. So here in Isaiah, we have a virgin conceiving and giving birth while in the case of the Messiah, we have one who gives birth while yet a virgin. Here, we have a child named God with us, while in the case of the Messiah, we have God with us! Here, we have a child addressed regarding his land, while in the case of the Christ, He is Lord over the land and all else. And indeed, as the theme is further developed in Isaiah 9 and 11, the prophet’s attention is turned more and more explicitly to the Christ himself rather than to the child that foreshadows the Christ.

III. The Nature of O.T. prophecy

A. Consider examples where the fulfillment in the Messiah presses the language to service beyond its O.T. use, for example, making what was only figurative in the OT literal in its messianic application.

1. 2 Sam. 7:12ff is very much parallel to Is. 7:14ff in that both are manifestly predictions, both have reference to an OT event, both have messianic import, and in both cases, the NT application presses the language to greater specificity than does the OT application.
 - a. 2 Sam. 7:12ff clearly applies to Solomon. See 1 Chron. 22:6-10, 2 Chron. 6:7-10.
 - b. 2 Sam. 7:12ff clearly applies to Jesus. See Heb. 1:5b.
 - c. The language of 2 Sam. 7:14b “I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,” refers to Solomon. See 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 26.
 - d. But the same language is true in a much more specific and literal sense with reference to Jesus (Mt. 26:67, 27:25)
2. So also in the case of Ps. 22, though it is not manifestly a prediction, we see language applicable to the OT referent that is all the more specifically and literally applicable to Jesus.
 - a. We can easily understand Ps. 22 to be a description of David’s own plight as he flees from Absalom. When he says “they cast lots for my garments,” it is a figurative way of saying they are eager to take anything that is mine. (Notably, Absalom had taken David’s wives in the sight of all Israel.)
 - b. But it is literally true of the Christ, the son of David (Jn. 19:23-24).

- c. We can imagine David saying “they pierced my hands and my feet” (Ps. 22:16) after he has fled barefoot (2 Sam. 15:30) and been the target of Shimei’s stones (2 Sam. 16:6).
 - d. But how much more explicitly the language is true of the Christ.
3. Delitzsch’s comment that the prophet must not have been referring to his wife for if that had been his intention, he could hardly have expressed himself in a more ambiguous and unintelligible manner” by choosing to refer to her as *hâ’almâh* (217) fails to take into account the language of foreshadowing. When God told Abraham to take his son and offer him as a sacrifice, He referred to the son as “your son, your only son whom you love” (Gen. 22:1). In fact, Abraham had another son, Ishmael, for whom he had demonstrated his love (Gen. 17:18). While it is true that one could explain the language by noting that Ishmael was the son of a handmaid, and was not to be Abraham’s heir, and was now gone away, still it seems apparent the Lord spoke as He did not because it was the most appropriate language to describe the immediate referent, namely Isaac, but because it was the most appropriate language to later be recognized as referring to the only Son of God whom He loved, whom Isaac foreshadowed.
- B. Specifically, this section of Isaiah, chapters 7-9, has other prophecies that are of the foreshadowing sort.**
- 1. Heb. 2:12-13 quotes three passages from the OT, putting all of them in the mouth of the Messiah so that he speaks the words in the first person.
 - a. The first is a quotation from Psalm 22:22, where David has been describing his own plight, which itself foreshadows the suffering of the Messiah. Ps. 22:22 is a promise of David’s that he would declare the Lord’s name unto his brethren, but Heb. 3:2 makes that statement belong to Jesus, who was the son of David.
 - b. The second is a phrase found in 2 Sam. 22:3; Is. 8:17; and Is. 12:2 (In all three passages, the LXX (Rahlfs’ edition) has *pepoithōs esomai ep’ autōi* and Heb. 2:13a has *egō esomai pepoithōs ep’ autoi*. It seems reasonable to suppose that inasmuch as the writer of Hebrews quotes Is. 8:18 in 2:13b, Is. 8:17 is at least included as a source for the quotation in 2:13a. In Isaiah 8:17, it is Isaiah who speaks; in Heb. 2:12a the words are spoken by Jesus.
 - c. The third is a quotation from Is. 8:18, “Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me.” In Is. 8:18, these words belong to Isaiah. In Heb. 2:13, they belong to Jesus.
 - 2. Then “why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth” use a son of the prophetess to foreshadow the Christ?

Conclusion:

- I. *almah* doesn’t necessarily mean virgin, but if used of a reputable woman, you would charitably assume she was a virgin.
- II. Even so, the language of Is. 7:14 does not seem likely to have led a Jew of the 8th century B.C. to understand that a child would be born without a human father. If this was to be a sign to Ahaz or to the house of David at that time, what they would have understood Isaiah to mean is germane. Let us imagine that in Jerusalem at that time, it could safely be assumed that an unmarried woman was a

virgin (an assumption that seems indeed charitable given what we know about that society from Is. 3:16-23; 4:4; Hos. 4:13-14; and Amos 2:7-8). Let us imagine that we live in that society and that the prophet announces that he has seen a vision of a maiden, pregnant, and soon to bear a child who will be called Immanuel, and that the child will eat curds and honey when or before he is old enough to distinguish between good and evil and at that time the threat from Syria and Israel will be gone, and that all of this constitutes a sign. Even if, as Young insists, the maiden be unmarried, would we not suppose that this maiden will evidently be getting married very soon and will soon thereafter conceive?

- III. In Is. 7:14, *almah* refers to the “the prophetess,” whom we may assume was a virgin inasmuch as she was young and therefore likely not a widow. And yet there is no hint that she would remain a virgin until giving birth. In fact, Isaiah “approaches” her and as a result she conceives.
- IV. But as is the case with other events and prophecies that have OT events in view, the significance of the details as realized in the foreshadowed life of the Messiah are not identical to their OT counterparts. In fact, the realization in the life of the Messiah presses the language to service beyond what was needed in the first realization. Just as David’s enemies might well be supposed to have cast lots for his clothing and pierced his hands and feet only figuratively, those who crucified Jesus did these things literally. Just as it can be argued, with a bit of mental flexibility, that Isaac was Abraham’s son, his only son, the characterization is much more readily applicable to Jesus, God’s unique (“only begotten”) son. So while in the OT, a young woman, who might have been presumed a virgin, would marry and bear a child who would signify God’s presence, in the NT a young woman who would yet be a virgin when her child was born would bring into the world a son who would himself be God with us.

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EndLesson3

God Against the Nations, the Idols, and Pride

Grady Huggins

Text: The Book of Isaiah

Introduction:

I. God Versus the Nations

- A. While the vision of Isaiah primarily concerns Judah and Jerusalem (1:1) there is scarcely a chapter in the book that does not refer to foreign nations either specifically or generally (56 of 66 chapters).
- B. Much of our focus will be on chapter 13-27 since this section is generally designated as God's judgment against the nations.
 1. Similar sections of oracles against the nations occur in Jeremiah 46-51, Ezekiel 25-32, and Amos 1-2, but each with a slightly different purpose and focus in their contexts.
 - a. Amos' message seems to be that God will judge Israel and Judah just as He judges all the nations surrounding them.
 - b. Jeremiah's message seems to be that God will judge all the other nations just as He is judging Jerusalem.
 - c. Ezekiel's message seems to be that God will judge the nations for their crimes against Judah.
 2. In Isaiah this section against the nations seems to primarily function as a warning to God's people against seeking security in the nations or allowing fear of the nations to compromise their trust in the Lord.¹
 - a. The historical events of Isaiah 7 and 36-39 show why such a message was deeply needed (cf. 2 Kings 18:13-16).
 3. While many of these prophecies regarding the nations serve a secondary purpose of confirming God's omniscience and claim to deity for future generations (41:21-24; 44:6-8; 45:20-22; 46:8-11; 48:3-7), we will focus primarily on their message to Isaiah's original audience and how this applies to us today.
 - a. This purpose of confirming God's sovereign control over history through fulfilled prophecy would still apply to Isaiah's original audience in regard to certain "interim fulfillments" (14:24-27; 18:1-7; 20:1-6; 22:15-25).

II. God Versus the Idols

¹ "Isaiah 13-23 is not generally concerned with the defeat of peoples with whom Judah is or might be at war... It relates to peoples whom Judah might regard as allies, or who might regard Judah as a potential ally... Yahweh is going to put down all these nations; it is foolish to put trust in any of them" (Goldingay, 94-95).

- A. The problem of idolatry among God’s people was just another manifestation of their misplaced faith and fear.
 - 1. It was primarily because Judah was “filled with the influences from the east” and “(struck) bargains with the children of foreigners” (2:6) that they were in turn “filled with idols” (2:8).
 - 2. In 57:5-13, God indicts Israel for their misplaced devotion to idols and foreign kings not as two separate problems, but as one in the same.
 - 3. God’s warning from the beginning had been not to make covenants with the people of the land lest they be drawn into idolatry (Ex. 34:12-17).
 - 4. Because of idolatry’s relationship with the influence of the nations, we will only treat it peripherally in this study.

III. God Versus Pride

- A. “Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; for why should he be esteemed?” (2:22).
 - 1. An overestimation of man’s power and capabilities is the central problem that plagued God’s people in relation to the nations around them.
 - 2. This manifested itself in 3 ways that will form the outline for our study – *fear, faith, and fellowship*.

Body:

I. Structure

- C. Goldingay sees a geographical organization of chapters 13-23 beginning with the northern powers (13:1-14:27), progressing to Judah’s immediate neighbors (15:1-17:14), then addressing southern powers (18:1-20:6), and ending with northern powers once again (21:1-23:18). (91)
 - 1. While there seems to be some validity to these groupings, this approach fails to address the thematic sequence of these oracles and does not explain the unexpected intrusion of God’s people in chapters 17 and 22.
- D. Motyer proposes a more thematic organization grouping 13-27 into three sections (13-20, 21-23, and 24-27) with five subdivisions each. (126)

1. Simon Harris provided this chart which evidently comes from a different printing of Motyer’s commentary:

Babylon (13:1-14:27) <i>Political Overthrow</i>	The Desert by the Sea [Babylon] (21:1-10) <i>Religious Overthrow</i>	The City of Emptiness (24:1-20) <i>Broken laws (5)</i> <i>Broken gates (12)</i>
Philistia (14:28-32) <i>A Davidic king will yet reign in Zion</i>	Silence [Edom] (21:11-12) <i>Indefinite continuance of things as they are</i>	Zion’s King (24:21-23) <i>‘After many days’</i>
Moab (15:1-16:14) <i>Moab in need, but through pride refuses shelter in Zion</i>	Evening [Arabia] (21:13-17) <i>Desert tribes in need; no ultimate refuge in mutual security</i>	The Great Banquet (25:1-12) <i>All nations feasted in Zion save Moab, excluded by pride</i>
Damascus/Ephraim (17:1-18:7) <i>Strong cities forsaken (9)</i> <i>The forgotten rock (10)</i>	The Valley of Vision [Jerusalem] (22:1-25) <i>The city torn down (10)</i>	The City of God (26:1-20) <i>The strong city (1)</i> <i>The everlasting rock (4)</i>
Egypt (19:1-20:6) <i>Co-equal membership: Egypt, Assyria and Israel</i>	Tyre (23:1-18) <i>Holiness to the Lord (18)</i>	The Final Gathering (27:1-13) <i>The harvest from Egypt and Assyria (12-13)</i>

2. “We move with Isaiah from the definite present, the world around him (the precise headings) into the hazier future (the enigmatic headings) and on to the remoteness of the eschaton, the Last Day where, from Isaiah’s perspective, everything seems to merge into one.” (Motyer, 126)
3. The parallel nature of the five subdivisions in each section seem to give this approach some validity, though there are some places where it is harder to see than in others.

E. Perhaps it is best to see elements of both geographical and thematic organization while not holding to either too rigidly.

II. Fear

A. Don’t fear the nations

1. We first see this message directed towards Ahaz when facing the combined forces of Aram and Israel: “...Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be faint-hearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands...” (7:4).
 - a. They’re making a lot of smoke, but no real fire (contrast 10:17; 30:27, 33; etc.).
2. Hezekiah is given a similar message when faced with the threats of Rabshakeh and the Assyrian army: “...Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me” (37:6).
3. In both cases cited above Isaiah precedes to give a prophecy of judgment on the threatening nations (7:7-9; 37:7).
4. Some of the prophecies against the nations in 13-27 send a similar message: “They won’t be able to hurt you when they’re dead.”

- a. This message of deliverance from fear is seen very clearly in the taunt song against the king of Babylon (14:3-8, 16-17; cf. 21:2, 10).²
- b. The interim prophecy of deliverance from Assyria would serve a similar function (14:24-25).
- c. 17:12-14 states this theme of deliverance from oppressive powers in more general terms, perhaps making veiled reference to the Assyrian threat again.³

B. Fear God

1. Merely freeing Israel from earthly fears was not the end goal of this deliverance, but inspiring them and their neighbors to a deeper fear and reverence for God.
2. Isaiah makes a clear contrast between these two fears in 8:11-13
 - a. "...And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread" (8:12-13).
3. Chapters 13-27 begin with the LORD of hosts mustering His army for battle (13:4) and record victory after victory of His forces over oppressive powers and ally nations alike. The message quickly becomes clear that His armies should inspire more fear than any earthly foe.
 - a. Egypt will flinch at any movement from God's hand and duck whenever its shadow passes over them. Any mention of the little land of Judah will inspire terror in them (19:16-17).⁴
 - b. The symbolic destruction of the city of chaos⁵ (24:10), overthrowing all worldly powers and laying waste the earth (24:1-4), inspires reverence and fear among the nations.
 - 1) "For You have made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin; a palace of stranger is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. Therefore a strong people will glorify You; cities of ruthless nations will revere You" (25:2-3).

C. These themes are picked back up later in the book as well.

1. God's message of comfort involves removing all fear of men.

² However, it appears that God's people will undergo "harsh service" and "enslavement" (14:3) and be thoroughly "threshed" (21:10) before this fearsome foe will be removed.

³ "No names are mentioned, for, as usual, Isaiah is not so much interested in pinning events to dates as in seeing principles of truth embodied in events. Yet it is not hard to read between the lines and see the times of the Assyrian crisis: many nations in turmoil (17:12), intense diplomatic activity (18:1), apparent divine inactivity (18:4), the sudden end of the crisis (17:14)" (Motyer, 151-152).

⁴ "At no time in history has the nation of Judah been a terror to Egypt; it is Judah's God that inspires dread" (Hailey, 165).

⁵ "In a broader but deeply significant way the contraction from the devastation of the world (1) to the downfall of the city (10) reflects the movement from the universalism of Genesis 9:19 to the particularism of the city-building of Genesis 11:1-9, linked by the motif-word 'scattering'... The city, therefore, is the human attempt to impose order and create security without reference to God" (Motyer, 184).

- a. “I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies and of the son of man who is made like grass, that you have forgotten the LORD your Maker...?” (51:12-13; cf. 2:22).
2. After being indicted for travelling far distances to appeal to foreign kings (57:9-10) Israel is questioned, “Of whom were you worried and fearful when you lied, and did not remember Me nor give Me a thought?” (57:11).
3. After picturing God as a glorious warrior bringing justice and judgment on the nations (59:17-18), we are told, “So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun...” (59:19).

III. Faith

A. Don't put your faith in the nations.

1. This misplaced faith was part of Ahaz's error in rejecting the message of the prophet. He put his faith in Assyria to deliver him from Aram and Israel instead of trusting in the Lord (7:12-13; 2 Kings 16:7-9).
 - a. In response God pronounced that Assyria would become the nation's downfall. *“Assyria will come up to Judah alright, just wait and see”* (7:17).
2. As Hezekiah was confronted with the threat of Assyria, he had to face the same decision. Would he fully trust in God or put his faith in the help of nations around him and his own military preparations?
 - a. Rabshakeh suspected some possible reliance upon Egypt by Hezekiah (36:6, 9).
 - b. Isaiah adamantly preached against such an alliance and speaks of Judean ambassadors travelling down to Egypt as a disgraceful reality rather than simply a dangerous possibility (30:1-7; 31:1).
3. The oracles against the nations often address the hopelessness of potential allies.
 - a. Babylon (13:1-14:23, 21:1-10)
 - 1) While the oracles against Babylon seem to primarily look forward to their eventual rise and fall as a dominant world power, Babylon was also a significant anti-Assyrian power in Isaiah's day.
 - a) Goldingay cites J. D. Watts who refers to Babylon as “the prime symbol of successful revolt against Assyrian sovereignty.” (Goldingay, 96)
 - 2) Merodach-baladan's letter to Hezekiah in 39:1 was likely sent, in part, to recruit Judah into an anti-Assyrian alliance.⁶
 - b. Philistia (14:29-32)

⁶ “Furthermore it is not expressly stated but implied that the purpose of the coming of the Babylonian envoys was to prepare the way for some sort of Babylonian-Judean alliance... A bid for closer cooperation against the common foe, Assyria, is certainly involved, as practically all writers on the subject agree” (Leupold, 592-593).

“The fact that Hezekiah showed the envoys all his treasures and weapons (vss. 2, 4) and the fact that Isaiah announced Judah would be carried into Babylonian captivity... (vss. 6-7) both support the interpretation that Merodach-baladan's real intention was to persuade Hezekiah to join him in rebellion against Assyria.” (Willis, 344).

- 1) This oracle concludes with Isaiah's response to the "messengers of the nation" (14:32) suggesting that Philistia was approaching Hezekiah, as the new king of Judah, to encourage him to join an anti-Assyrian alliance.⁷
- c. Moab (15:1-16:14)
- 1) "Sargon of Assyria charged that Moab joined Ashdod in revolt against Assyria in 713 B.C." (Butler, 119)
 - 2) Ancient near eastern texts seem to indicate "Moab joined with Philistia, Edom, and Judah in rebelling against Assyria in the late eighth century." (Goldingay, 107)
- d. Aram / Ephraim (17:1-14)
- 1) This oracles seems to date back earlier to the times of Ahaz and Pekah and Rezin referred to in chapter 7.
 - 2) "Why does Isaiah conceal Ephraim behind an apparent address to Damascus, the capital city of the kingdom of Aram? This is precisely the point... Ephraim is here found seeking security in Damascus, not in the Lord..." (Motyer, 148)
 - 3) "Ephraim's alliance with a heathen power against the city and people of Jehovah brought him under the same judgment of condemnation as that of the heathen nation." (Hailey, 153)
- e. Cush / Ethiopia (18:1-7)
- 1) Tirhakah, king of Cush, is mentioned as going out to fight against Sennacherib in 37:9.
 - 2) When Piankhi of Ethiopia overtook Egypt in 715 BC and established his dynasty there, "He immediately sought to be a world statesman and began sending envoys to create an anti-Assyrian conglomerate." (Motyer, 153)
 - 3) Isaiah refers to envoys coming by sea (v. 2), evidently on a mission to gather allies against Assyria. It seems Isaiah instructs them to go back home because God has it all under control.⁸
- f. Egypt (19:1-25)
- 1) We have already made mention of the evidence of an alliance between Judah and Egypt in the days of Hezekiah above (36:6, 9; 30:1-7; 31:1). This oracle seems to come from the same general time period.
- g. Egypt and Cush (20:1-6)

⁷ "Throughout the Assyrian period Philistia was a ceaseless agitator for rebellion. In 734 BC Gath refused tribute and was sacked; in 720 Philistia connived with Egypt to rebel, and Sargon II defeated Egypt at Gath and took Ashkelon and Gaza; in 711 Ashdod was somehow central to an unsuccessful west Palestinian revolt; in 705 Ashkelon rebelled and fell to Sennacherib in his campaign of 701. The death of Ahaz in 715 could well have been the occasion of a Philistine approach to Hezekiah with a view to joint anti-Assyrian action" (Motyer, 139).

⁸ "Is the prophet speaking to them, instructing them to return to their home and to be quiet, for God is about to take care of the situation and there is no need for becoming excited (Barnes, Rawlinson)? In the light of II Kings 19:9, this interpretation seems to make the better sense" (Hailey, 157).

- 1) Here the two previous nations are combined in a 3-year message of Isaiah that began in 713 BC, the year Assyria came up against Ashdod. (Hailey, 171)
 - 2) Isaiah wraps up this message by saying, “Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?’” (20:5-6).
- h. Edom and Arabia (21:11-17)
- 1) These oracles are more enigmatic. While there may not be any specific evidence of misplaced reliance upon these nations, they help round out the full picture of the utter helplessness of all the peoples surrounding Judah.
- i. Jerusalem (22:1-14)
- 1) Instead of addressing misplaced trust in other nations, here God rebukes Judah for misplaced trust in themselves.
 - 2) While Hezekiah eventually puts his trust fully in God to deliver from Sennacherib (37:1-4, 14-20; 2 Chron. 32:6-8), it seems some of this may have been delayed and in response to Isaiah’s preaching.
 - 3) The fortifications of 22:8-11 may be a reference to the preparations made by Hezekiah in 2 Chron. 32:1-5.
 - 4) 2 Kings 18:13-16 could possibly provide the background for this oracle and explain the inappropriate rejoicing of 22:1-2, 12-13.
- j. Tyre (23:1-18)
- 1) “Shalmaneser (727-722) besieged Tyre unsuccessfully and at the end of the century Tyre was still rebelling. In 701 Sennacherib devastated the mainland and did vast damage to Tyre’s trade and it was not until about 630, with the decline of Assyria, that Tyre began to revive.” (Motyer, 181)
 - 2) Judah had a long and sometimes sordid history of alliance with the Phoenicians (1 Kings 7:13-14; 9:10-14; 16:29-33). However, there is no clear evidence of an alliance against the Assyrian threat at this time.
- k. The Whole World (24-27)
- 1) Just in case Judah has not gotten the point by now, God moves on to proclaim a general judgment over all worldly powers.⁹

B. Put your faith in God

1. These messages of judgment are not an end within themselves, but a means towards an end. “Striking but healing” is God’s purpose, even for the nations (19:22). He will not continue to thresh His people forever (28:23-29).

⁹ “Having dealt with individual nations and their judgment, the prophet now looks to the coming of a universal judgment upon the entire heathen world, including his own apostate people. Actually, it is a judgment upon that which the world adores and in which it trusts: power, the lusts of the eye and the flesh, and the vainglory of life” (Hailey, 195).

2. The message that He is driving home is that He alone is worthy of their full and complete trust (7:9; 10:20; 26:3-4; 30:15).
3. While the majority of Isaiah's audience would refuse this message (6:9-10), it seems that king Hezekiah eventually got the message.
 - a. Rabshakeh made a point of warning the inhabitants of Jerusalem multiple times not to listen to Hezekiah when he told them to trust in their God (36:15-20). It seems this was a message he was constantly repeating to the people (2 Chron. 32:6-8).
 - b. Hezekiah even seems to use a similar phrase to Isaiah in describing Judah's helplessness to deliver themselves (37:3; cf. 26:16-18; see also 66:9).
 - c. Hezekiah's contempt for the idols of surrounding nations could also reflect the influence of Isaiah, as this is a common theme in his preaching (37:18-20; cf. 44:9-20; 45:20-22; 46:1-2; etc.)

IV. Fellowship

A. Do not seek fellowship with the nations.

1. From the beginning of the book, we see that God's people are indicted for adopting the religious and moral culture of the nations around them.
 - a. They are filled with influences from the east, silver and gold, horses, and idols (2:6-9). They have adopted all the materialism, pride, and religious error of their neighbors.
2. The theme of idolatry throughout the book seems to be the byproduct of improper relationships with surrounding nations as we saw in the introduction (cf. 57:5-10).
3. This improper fellowship with surrounding nations seems to be Hezekiah's downfall in relation to the Babylonian envoys (39:1-7).
4. Hezekiah's response to the "messengers of the nation" should have been: "The Lord has founded Zion, and the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it" (14:32).
 - a. Instead of showing off all the earthly treasures of his house, he should have shown him the spiritual treasures of Zion – "The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. And He will be the stability of your times, a wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the lord is his treasure" (33:5-6).

B. Offer the nations fellowship with God.

1. While repeatedly warning against the influence of the nations, Isaiah is far from being nationalistic. He repeatedly pictures the promises of Zion being extended to all nations and peoples.
 - a. Just prior to rebuking Israel for being filled with the influences from the east (2:6), Isaiah pictured all nations streaming to the mountain of the house of the Lord and finding peace there (2:1-4). Yet, their words to each other express a Godward attitude: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths" (2:3; cf. 52:1).
2. We see this theme of the nations sharing in fellowship with God interspersed throughout the oracles of judgment in chapters 13-27.

- a. In the midst of judgment on Babylon we are told, “When the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob” (14:1).
 - b. While the envoys from Cush were instructed to return home, they were also told a time will come when they will return with a gift of homage for the Lord of hosts at Mount Zion (18:7)
 - c. Perhaps most striking is the passage regarding Egypt’s fellowship with Jehovah in 19:18-25.
 - 1) Pharaoh had once said, “I do not know the Lord” (Exod. 5:2), but now all Egyptians will know the Lord (19:21).
 - 2) Pharaoh had once refused to let the Israelites make sacrifices to the Lord (Exod. 5:3-4), but now an altar will be erected to the Lord in the midst of the land (19:19) and they will worship Him with sacrifice and offering (19:21).
 - 3) God had once told Pharaoh, “Let My people go” (Exod. 5:1), but now God proclaims, “Blessed is Egypt My people” (19:25) and promises to deliver them from their oppressors.
 - d. Though Tyre will return to her materialistic harlotry, we are told there will come a day when “her gain and her harlot’s wages will be set apart to the Lord” (23:18).¹⁰
 - e. In chapters 24-27 Isaiah’s pictures of universal judgment are matched by pictures of universal praise and blessing (24:14-15; 25:6-10).
3. This theme of welcoming the nations into fellowship with God recurs many times throughout the messages of comfort and hope in chapters 40-66 as well (49:6, 22-23; 56:3-8; 66:18-21).

Conclusion:

- I. While we may not face the same type of military and political climate as Judah did in the time of Isaiah, the moral dangers we face are not truly any different.
 - A. We must not fear what the world fears, but develop a deep and abiding reverence for God (Matt. 10:28; 1 Pet. 5:6-7; Php. 4:6-7).
 - B. We must not put our faith in the things of this world to give us security or fulfillment, but rest ourselves fully upon the faithful care of our almighty Creator (Matt. 6:19-21, 32-33; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Isa. 26:3-4).
 - C. We must not conform to this world, but reach out to it with the transforming power of the gospel (Jas. 4:4; Matt. 11:19; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 12:2; Matt. 5:13-16)

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¹⁰ “Isaiah foresees a new, priestly status for Tyre: *set apart for* is (lit.) ‘holiness to,’ the very word that adorned the high priest (Exod. 28:36)” (Motyer, 182).

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EndLesson4

Unified Themes in the Servant Songs and Texts

Seth Mauldin

Text: Isa 42:1-9; Isa. 43:8-13; Isa. 45:1-7; Isa 49:1-12; Isa 50:4-11; ~~Isa 52:13-53:12~~;
Isa 61:1-3.

Introduction:

- I. Themes of servants and anointed ones run heavily in the book of Isaiah.
 - A. Outside of the “traditional” servant songs the role is occupied by Isaiah himself (Ch. 22), Eliakim who would depose Shebna in Ch. 20, and even corporate Israel in places like Ch. 41, before the servant songs usually begin to be numbered.
 1. The purpose of this study will be to narrow the focus to the texts in chapters 42-61 which more fully focus on the role of servant as a divinely appointed position with a divinely determined purpose.
- II. For the purposes of this study, the role of servant will be considered to be occupied by four groups or individuals.
 - A. Idealized Israel—the role that they ought to have played.
 - B. Exiled Israel—the role that they would play.
 - C. The Immediate Redeemer of Israel—Cyrus who provided physical freedom.
 - D. The Future Redeemer of Israel—The “Anonymous Servant” of 52-53, and 61.

Body:

- I. Idealized Israel:
 - A. *Isaiah 42:1-9*
 1. While having obvious Messianic implications in the light of the NT (The Spirit, the meek attitude, etc), these verses describe the service of Jacob as God envisioned it:
 - a. Verses 1-4 emphasize a relationship of submission to God and a life influenced by His character and nature.
 - b. Verses 5-9 describe one who is driven to then reflect that nature to the peoples of the earth and uphold the name of the LORD.
 - B. *Isa. 43:8-13*
 1. Here Israel serves in the role of witness to the nations—specifically to those who were spiritually blind and deaf.
 2. The works that God had both foretold and performed in Israel were testimony to the earth that it only had one God.
- II. Exiled Israel: (*admittedly the most difficult to justify*) *Isa. 49:1-12*
 - A. The text of Isa. 49 is more difficult to relegate to a single category:

1. It follows the naming of Cyrus in 45 and has an obvious connection in that its theme is the redemption and freeing of Israel...
 2. It could well be transitioning to the Servant of 52/53 and 61—there are again heavy Messianic undertones.
 3. But it could also be taken as a reference to the Israel which would be called back from captivity, having a second chance to fulfill the role of Idealized Israel by standing as a witness to the delivering power of the LORD.
- III. Cyrus—The Immediate Redeemer of Israel: *Isa. 45:1-7*
- A. This text addresses the harsh reality that Israel had not lived up to the ideal.
 1. As a result, there would be an occasion where God’s servant would have to be rescued and restored by a new servant.
 - B. Cyrus takes on the role of God’s called in familiar ways:
 1. He is chosen of God.
 2. He is given a “special name.”
 3. He is promised power and wealth for fulfilling his role.
- IV. The Messiah—The Future Redeemer of Israel: *Isa. 52-53/61:1-3*
- A. The author of this material has been forbidden from discussing *Isa. 52/53* by the organizer of this event. The reasons for this are numerous
 1. That individual thinks it easy to talk about the Servant Songs by not talking about the most obvious and famous of said songs.
 2. That individual is a *jive turkey* who cares little to none for this author’s welfare.
 - B. After the stark transition of chapters 52/53, there is little doubt that chapter 61 is meant to continue the words and purpose of that same servant.
 1. Each of the other servants have paved the way for this final servant.
 - a. Idealized Israel was only an ideal—Actual Israel failed its purpose and had to be redeemed.
 - b. Cyrus gave physical freedom to Israel but could not give them their greatest need; nor did his freeing extend to the world at large.
 - c. Post-Exilic Israel had been restored to the land but had not been restored to the scope of the New Jerusalem and Zion foretold by the prophets.
 - d. It would take this final servant to fulfill God’s intent for His people.
- V. Unified Themes and Applications:
- A. ***The Need for a Perfect Servant:***
 1. Israel, (*as an individual and a collective*) fell far short of what God had envisioned.
 2. Although Cyrus performed the function, there is little to indicate that he saw himself as actively working for the Lord’s purpose.
 3. The returned exiles were subject to wildly varying degrees of zeal and devotion.
 - B. ***The Choice of God in Selecting a Servant:***

1. Israel was chosen before birth...
2. Cyrus was chosen before birth...
3. The final Servant was chosen before birth...

C. *The Purposes of the Servant:*

1. To glorify the name of the LORD in all the earth.
2. To be transformed by the character and nature of God.
3. To willingly submit to the rule and guidance of God.
4. To shine as a light to the blind and call out to the deaf.

D. *Messianic Themes of the Servants:*

1. Anointed by the Spirit of God.
2. Meek in attitude toward others.
3. Determined not to grow discouraged in the work.
4. A servant to the downtrodden: (*the blind, the weak, the poor, the prisoner*).
5. Mightily equipped by God to fulfill His purpose.

Conclusion:

- I. While the specific texts of Isaiah deal with the missions and purposes of God's select servants, they still offer a pattern for God's servants today.
 - A. The ideal of physical Israel gives purpose for spiritual Israel.
 - B. The failures of past servants stand as warnings for those of today.
 - C. The purpose of praising God and the emphasis on His control provide reminders and guidance for current servants.

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EndLesson5

Isaiah 52:12-53:12 and the Vicarious Atonement

Darryl Smelser

I. Reading of the Text

- A. Marred appearance and form, thus the sprinkling of nations (52:14-15)
- B. Esteemed as stricken of God, but they were our griefs He bore (53:4-5)
- C. Our iniquities, and the chastening for our well being, fell on Him (53:5)
- D. The LORD caused it, the LORD crushed Him (53:6,10)
- E. He was numbered with transgressors, but He was bearing the sin of many (53:12)

II. Reaction to the Text

- A. What Christ suffered was what was due to us.
- B. Christ was chastened by the Father, for our well being (53:5-6)
- C. Christ died in our stead, in our place, and by that we are justified (53:11-12).
- D. It was a substitutionary death, a vicarious atonement.

III. Three Views on Atonement

A. Non-substitution View

1. That Jesus Christ in no way served as a substitutionary sacrifice for man.
2. One advocate is Maurice Barnett: "The position that will be taken and argued in this book is that Jesus died for all men, 'on our behalf,' not 'in our place;' there was no 'penal substitution' of Jesus for our sins, guilt and punishment; a ransom price was not paid to anyone or anything." (Vol 2 of The Scheme of Redemption, "Reconciliation," p. 14)

B. Substitution View: Guilt and Punishment

1. That Jesus was our substitute, not just in bearing the punishment for our sins, but also the guilt.
2. That He literally became sin, bore our guilt, experienced spiritual death, and was forsaken by the Father.

C. Substitution View: Punishment, not Guilt.

1. That Jesus was our substitute, bearing the punishment for our sins, but not the guilt.
2. He took the punishment due to us, but did not die spiritually nor was He forsaken by the Father.

IV. Non-Substitution View

A. Denies that redemption includes any punishment of sin, or any price paid for sins.

B. Rather that sin is simply forgiven, dismissed

C. That the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf (not in our stead) opened the possibility for forgiveness, and those who are saved reach it on the basis of meeting divine terms:

1. “Jesus opened the way by which sinners could return to God and God could then be merciful, forgiving their transgressions. He is the way, the truth and the life. We go to the Father only through Him. This could only be possible on the basis of our proper, God decreed, response to that sacrifice. As we shall see, the way to eternal life is open only for those who meet God’s terms” (Barnett, p. 147).

2. This is opposed to the view that while we deserve death, we are saved by the grace of God in that He put that punishment of death on Jesus; that we can’t save ourselves, because if we pay the price for sin we are lost; yet Jesus took the punishment of death for us, to save us, thus accomplishing something we could not possibly do; and that therefore we are not saved by our works, but by the work of God (Eph 2:1-10, Rom 5.6-11).

3. If rather Christ’s death was something He did without any rational connection to the punishment we deserve, if it was simply an action He performed, how does it save?

4. If His death is disconnected to solving the problem of the punishment we deserve, and since the view states that “the way to eternal life is open to those who meet God’s terms,” why are we not to conclude that this is salvation by works rather than by grace?

D. Claim: that there is no evidence in Scripture of God needing the demands of justice to be satisfied. Discussion of this point below, under the third view: “Substitution: Punishment, not Guilt.”

E. Claim: Substitutionary Views are Calvinism.

1. This claim is made, I believe, in response to our second view under consideration, “Substitution View: Guilt and Punishment,” which holds that our guilt is imputed to Christ in a very literal way, i.e., that our sins were actually transferred from us, to Him, on the cross, making Christ guilty of all sin.

a. Barnett quotes a Calvinist defender of the idea that Jesus bore guilt of human sin, Augustus H. Strong in his Systematic Theology, p. 761:

“When, and how, did Christ take this guilt and this penalty upon him? With regard to penalty, we have no difficulty in answering this ... penalty rested upon him from the very beginning of his life. This penalty was inherited, and was the consequence

of Christ's taking human nature ... if Christ inherited penalty, it must have been because he inherited guilt.”

b. It is further argued that if our salvation is based on the idea that Christ literally took our sins and guilt on Himself, our sin and guilt being transferred from us to Him, then we don't have to suffer for it and God can't make us suffer for it, since we would no longer be guilty of it; man would no longer even need forgiveness for anything at all. It's argued that this leads to either universalism (which most who hold substitutionary thought reject), or to Calvinism, i.e. that Christ died only for some (limited atonement), and that those some are automatically saved (irresistible grace), and cannot be lost since they bear no more guilt, all their sins having already been transferred over to Christ (perseverance of the saints).

V. Substitution View: Guilt and Punishment – that Jesus bore both.

A. Among brethren in my circles, elements of this view have been much more common.

B. Martin Luther describes it in particularly strong terms:

“And this, no doubt all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world. For he, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and, briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all men in his body: not that he himself committed them, but for that he received them, being committed or done of us, and laid them upon his own body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood ... If thou wilt deny him to be a sinner and accursed, deny also that he was crucified and was dead ... But if it be not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say that he was accursed, and of all sinners the greatest ... God, our most merciful Father, sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying, Be thou Peter, that denier; Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David, that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed all the sins of all men. See, therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them” (Commentary on Galatians, pp. 213-215)

C. More commonly in my circles, various passages are thought to indicate Jesus bore the guilt of sin:

1. That Jesus was made to be sin (2Cor 5:21), and this being understood to indicate that he bore not only the punishment but also the guilt;
2. That God cannot look upon wickedness (Hab 1:13) and this being understood to indicate that God had to look away from Christ on the Cross because he bore not only the punishment but also the guilt;

3. That Jesus cried out on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34), and this being understood to indicate that the Father had actually forsaken Christ in that hour because He bore not only the punishment but also the guilt.
4. That this sin-filled Jesus was sent to Hell during the 3 days of his death, as per the KJV rendering of Acts 2:27, “because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” This of course is simply a faulty translation and should read Hades instead of Hell.

D. Objections to this view

1. The statement that Jesus was made to be sin need not mean he was literally sin. Indeed we should consider that a person simply cannot be sin in any literal sense. Being made to be sin, then, is obviously figurative in some way. Might it not be only indicating that sin must be punished (Gen 2:17, Rom 6:23), and God was going to put the punishment for our sins on Jesus? Without the idea that Jesus was actually guilty?
2. If sins were imputed from us to Christ so we could be rid of them, and thus He bore them and the associated guilt literally, how did Christ get rid of them from Himself so as to be reunited with the Father after the cross? This seems to be too much application of physics to the issue of resolving sin and guilt.
3. “My God, My God,” and Psalm 22 – Was Jesus crying out in confusion, “Why...?”
 - a. Jesus knew the plan. He was not suddenly confused, nor was He forsaken.
 - b. Rather He was pointing witnesses and us back to Psalm 22.
 - i. David suffering some conspiracy against him, and all his prospects seem to be failing. His enemies are looking to be successful. Yet when it seems all is lost, God’s deliverance suddenly shines through (22:21a), and David rejoices that as it turns out, God had NOT despised him nor hidden His face from him (22:22-24).
 - ii. This foreshadowing type shows that although the scene at Golgotha looked hopeless, that the conspiracy looked to be successful, that all seemed to be lost, in fact God was not abandoning Jesus nor hiding His face from Jesus, and on that Sunday morning God’s deliverance suddenly shone through.
4. John 16:32 – Jesus tells the disciples that although they will scatter, leaving Him alone, but that nevertheless He is not alone as He faces this trial, because the Father is with Him.
5. It seems to me at at least, that the oneness of God is impossibly violated by the idea that the Father and Son were separated at any time. “The LORD is our God, the LORD is One” (Dt 6:4), and the possibility of separation seems against His very nature.

VI. Substitution View: Punishment, not Guilt – that Jesus bore our punishment, but not our guilt.

A. The message of Scripture: The penalty of sin is death (Gen 2:17, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1). Man sins. We want to escape the penalty, but God is just and cannot simply ignore the problem of sin. While He is just, he also wants to justify man (Rom 3:26). What did God do, to remain just but also to justify man? He demonstrated HIS righteousness (as opposed to our attempts at righteousness), by displaying Christ as a propitiation in His blood. Again, God did this that He might be just and the justifier of those who would be saved. That shows that justice was involved in the sacrifice of Christ. His death was the sacrifice to fulfill justice, it was the punishment of sin. Man's sin. He died in our place, a Substitute accomplishing a vicarious atonement.

B. This is the message of Isaiah 52:12–53:12, that He wasn't bearing sins of His own, but that He was bearing ours. The non-substitution advocate says that Isaiah is merely describing cruel things that people did to Jesus, that none of this was punishment laid on Jesus by God; yet the text says that it was the chastening for our well being, that the LORD caused our iniquity to fall on Him, and that the LORD crushed him.

C. He became a curse for us (Gal 3:13); we had a curse upon us, partially enacted, but He, in this substitutionary role, stepped in and became a curse for us.

D. The Day of Atonement – central to OT typology

1. Both goats are types of Christ. Non-Substitution advocates object that only one can be a type, and that the type is obviously the first goat which is killed. But if Jesus can in a single parable say He is the door of the sheep and then immediately say He is the shepherd of the sheep, then I'm reluctant to say that he can't be both goats!

2. The first goat, the one for Jehovah, is sacrificed and its blood makes atonement for the priest, for this family, and for all the assembly.

3. The second goat, the scapegoat, bears all the iniquities of God's people.

a. Aaron lays his hands on the head of the goat, almost a picture of leaning on, depending on, this goat.

b. He lays all the people's sins and transgressions on the goat, so that the goat bears them instead of the people bearing them.

c. Strengthening the type, is the parallel between the language of the scapegoat and the language of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:

i. "...all their sins, and he shall lay them on the head of the goat;" "the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities" (Lev 16:21-22)

ii. "...the iniquity of us all to fall on Him;" "He will bear their iniquities" (Is 53:6,11)

4. The scapegoat, who takes the sins of the people literally away is a strong type of Christ, who removes our sins and our guilt from us. The idea of removal is reiterated in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

VII. “Equivalence”

A. Non-Substitution advocates argue that for Jesus to be our substitute, the punishment laid on Him would have to be equal to the punishment due to man because of sin. Obviously, the two punishments, Jesus’ 3 days of physical death, and on the other hand the penalty for men, physical death, the second death, and eternal separation, are not identical. “Equivalence” is the idea of a punishment endured by Jesus which isn’t equal but nevertheless corresponds to the punishment due to man.

B. I have thought that we sometimes focus too much on trying to divide death into parts, rather than seeing it as a whole. God taught Adam that in the same day he would eat that fruit, he would die, and we recognise that passage as teaching us about the penalty for sin. It’s easy to say, “well, he died spiritually that day, and he would die physically later, and then the second death following that.” How about, Adam died that day. Death happened to him. He entered death. It would be a progression of a single tragedy (unless he puts his faith in God).

When Christ breathed His last, he tasted death (Heb2:9). Death happened to Him. I believe that’s enough.

Conclusion: Praise God that He is a God of Grace, Thank Jesus in particular that He was willing to step into our world and into our shoes, and experience death in our place, that He was willing to take the punishment of death, so that we can have life!

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EndLesson6

Isaiah 56-66 – Hope for All Jehovah’s Servants

David Raif

Text: Isaiah 56-66

Introduction:

- I. Chapters 56-66 is an exciting finale to the book of Isaiah.
 - A. **Is. 1-39 – A Book of Judgment** – The first half of the book of Isaiah is primarily about God’s judgment of the wicked (Israel and the nations). The second half focuses on hope.
 - B. **Is. 40-55 – Hope through Jehovah’s Anointed Servant** - In Is. 40-55, Isaiah speaks of hope offered through Jehovah’s servant. Here we witness the power of God as he works through his various servants, pointing us finally to his ultimate servant the Messiah.
 - C. **Is. 56-66 – Hope for Jehovah’s True Servants** - While chapters 40-55 relate how God brings about salvation through his anointed servant, chapters 56-66 show us how those who truly humble themselves to Jehovah (as true servants) will be saved through God’s power.
- II. Considering Is. 56-66 as a chiasmic structure offers a plausible logical flow and helps to highlight the primary messages of the section.

Body:

- I. Structure of Isaiah 56-66
 - A. While the study of chiasms can be subjective, making note of consistent repetition and structure can illustrate flow of thought and expose desired emphases in a passage.

B. Several suggest Isaiah 56-66 may form a chiasm centering on chapters 60-62.¹³ Whether or not we agree on the particulars of the chiasm, notice the mirrored repetition

A	56:1-8	A gathering of all peoples to the mountain of God	IDEAL
B	56:9-58:14	Contrast of the wicked and true righteousness	REALITY
C	59:1-59:15a	Rebuke, lament, and confession of Israel	CONFESSION
D	59:15b–21	God, the Divine Warrior	SALVATION
E	60:1-62:12	Jehovah’s glory shared with his servants	GLORY
D’	63:1-6	God, the Divine Warrior	SALVATION
C’	63:7-64:12	Rebuke, lament, and confession of Israel	CONFESSION
B’	65:1-66:16	Contrast of the wicked and true righteousness	REALITY
A’	66:17-24	A gathering of all peoples to the mountain of God ¹⁴	IDEAL

C. We should not be dogmatic about apparent chiastic structures.

1. Infatuation with a particular structure may negatively affect our reading of Scripture. Oswalt warns “the problem with positing such a highly complex structure...is the tendency to make the text fit the pattern one sees emerging” (462).
2. Extracting any outline from a text can be a subjective process. Biblical authors must be given flexibility in their own text and structure. Again from Oswalt, “One should not think...[this chiastic structure] corresponds to an outline, because each of the units on either side of chs. 60–62 incorporates the parallel ideas in somewhat different ways, and the failure to recognize this point will cause one to miss some essential emphases” (465).

D. However, noting this structure in Isaiah 56-66 helps identify...

1. ...*Unity* – This becomes evidence against popular, liberal ideas of form criticism. This structure also helps us identify Isaiah 56-66 as a unit and consider.
2. ...*Flow of Thought* – What may seem a jumble of similar ideas, turns out to be a well-calculated, round-trip journey from the current wicked nation to the mountain of God and back.

¹³ Both Smith (520) & Oswalt (462) have further discussion about a chiastic structure in Is. 56-66 in their commentaries. Both express some reservation in creating an overly complex layout. Additionally Oswalt mentions attempts of G. Polan’s, *In the Ways of Justice toward Salvation* (1986) & E. Charpentier’s *How to Read the Bible* (1991). Smith mentions an attempt made by R. H. O’Connell in *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah* (1994).

¹⁴ This structure is adapted from examples cited and suggested by Oswalt (462-465) and Smith (520).

- II. Proposed Logical Flow of Isaiah 56-66: In this section of Isaiah, God contrasts the wickedness and superficial religion of the day with his ideal for his people and speaks of a day when he would accomplish his goal through anointed Servant Jesus. (The bolded words below correspond to chiasmic structure illustrated on the previous page.)
- A. Chapter 56 begins by sharing God’s **IDEAL** of a perfect Israel: a multi-national people on God’s holy mountain characterized by righteousness, justice, and blessing.
 - B. The **REALITY** is that this ideal doesn’t describe the Israel around Isaiah. Instead he sees a wicked people who lack true righteousness and a people destined for judgment rather than blessing.
 - C. As the people respond with repentance and **CONFESSION**, God himself brings about **SALVATION** for those who turn from transgression.
 - D. In 60-62, God shares his **GLORY** with his people in the New Jerusalem, the mountain of God.
 - E. But remember it’s only God who can bring about this **SALVATION** and God will only save a people that have humbled themselves with repentance and **CONFESSION**.
 - F. **REALITY** check: Isaiah’s Israel is not there yet. Isaiah finishes with scathing rebukes and one last look toward the **IDEAL** on the mountain of God.

III. Development of Isaiah 56-66

- A. **56:1-8 God’s Ideal** - Jehovah begins with a picture of God’s ideal for his people: a nation that is righteous and just, keeping the covenant and keeping from evil. He speaks of previously alienated persons (the eunuch and the foreigner) being brought into God’s house where they can find fulfillment and be servants of God on his holy mountain.
- B. **56:9-58:14 Reality** - This amazing ideal contrasts sharply with the current condition of the people (Isaiah’s day). Religious leaders are blind and slumber and go their own way, **57** taking no notice of the death of the righteous. However, the righteous are blessed, entering into peace, whereas the wicked are left to the futility of their sin as they submit to things that do not deliver (adultery, deceit, idolatry, politics, etc.). He who humbles himself, taking refuge in Jehovah, will possess the land and his holy mountain. These are healed and are given peace, but “there is no peace for the wicked.”

58 God’s people are given a wake up call, a reality check, about their transgression. They seek the LORD, “delighting” in his ways but are confused why God seems not to notice them. God says they participate in a superficial religion based on rituals rather than true holiness. If only they would fast, loosening the bonds of wickedness and serve others, serving and sharing with those in need (thus delighting in the LORD and taking on his character), *then* your light will break out like the dawn, God will take notice of you, restore your foundations, and make you fruitful.

- C. **59:1-59:15a Confession** - God has power to save his people, but he refuses to listen and bless while they are in sin. Look at what you have become (2nd person); “your hands are covered in

blood!”¹⁵ The people (3rd person) lie, give birth to sin, wear their wickedness like clothing, ¹⁶ run to shed blood, and walk the way of destruction rather than peace or righteousness.

In 59:9, the text shifts to 1st person plural: “justice is far from us!” What follows is a full confession of wickedness, “Justice is far from us. We hope for light, but behold darkness! Salvation is far from us. We know our iniquities! The righteous are suffering!”

- D. **59:15b-21 Salvation** - God sees the confession of the people and that they have no one to intercede for them. God the divine warrior takes action, donning his armor of righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal. He promises wrath upon his enemies, but salvation to Zion, those who fear the LORD and turn from transgression. To this people, he gives his Spirit and his words that they and their children might speak like God.
- E. **60:1-62:12 Glory** - God calls his people to glory, “Arise and shine! See the glory and light I bring upon you. The nations will see this light and come from afar to rebuild the walls of the city. You will again be the place of my sanctuary and will be called the city of Jehovah. You were forsaken, but now you will be a city without violence or destruction, only salvation, praise, and light. All your people will be righteous!”
- 61** Good news is announced by the promised Servant (the Branch of Jesse - 11:2) on whom rests the Spirit of God (Lu. 4:16-18). Comfort, gladness, praise, and righteousness will be given to the people. They will be priests of Jehovah and a garden of glory before the nations **62** He continues, “I will not keep silent for Jerusalem until her righteousness and rest are established (62:6-7). You will no longer be called ‘Forsaken,’ but ‘Married’ and Jehovah will delight in you.”
- F. **63:1-6 Salvation** - We are again met with a picture of Jehovah as the divine warrior, coming in destruction on his enemies (represented by Edom) and redemption for his people. This gruesome image of God’s vengeance and salvation, reemphasizes that Jehovah is the only one who can accomplish this salvation (“I looked, and there was no one to help” (63:5)).
- G. **63:7-64:12 Confession** - They are reminded that God *had* saved his people in the past, giving them his Spirit, his love, his mercy (in the Exodus). God thought, “Surely they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely,” but they the sinned and grieved his Holy Spirit and God became their enemy (in captivity).

Then the people remember the days of Moses when Jehovah put his Holy Spirit in their presence and acted on behalf of his people. This memory causes them to cry out in lament and confession, “Where is your compassion! Return for the sake of your servants. **64** Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down (like at Sinai). You were angry because we sinned, but now we are the clay in your potter hands. Do not be angry beyond measure.” This

¹⁵ Echoing 1:15

¹⁶ Contrast 59:6 with 59:17.

illustrates the attitude God requires of his true servants.

- H. **65:1-66:17 Reality** – God responds in a surprising way. First he has permitted himself to be sought by those who did not seek him (the nations), because he has tired of this rebellious people (people of Isaiah’s day) who do not seek God’s ways and thoughts.¹⁷ He promises to bring punishment on this wicked people, measuring out their former works.¹⁸ All will not be destroyed, however. He will save some from the seed of Jacob, and his servants will live in his mountain. There will be inheritance, God promises, “for my people who seek me. But you are a people who forsake Jehovah and forget the holy mountain. I called you but you did not answer. Instead you did evil. Your end will not be like that of my servants.”¹⁹

“I will create a people with a new name, a new Jerusalem, a new heavens and a new earth, in which there will be gladness, fertility, and fulfillment. I will respond to them *before* they call, and there will be peace and rest on my holy mountain.”

66 “No house can contain me, but I will look for those who are humble and contrite in spirit, who are trembling at my word (ie. It’s not about the house and sacrifice; it’s about humility and fear of Jehovah). I consider the sacrifices of this people to be unclean because they practice abominations and do not answer me. He who dwells in this temple is coming in judgment.”

In contrast to judgment and destruction, 66:7-9 prophesies of the birth of a boy²⁰ and the birth of a nation from Zion (the Messiah and the church). God again makes a contrast is again made between the joy, comfort, and peace of the new Jerusalem, and the fire and destruction promised to his enemies. God’s servants would see the hand of Jehovah, but his enemies would see the sword of Jehovah.

- I. **66:18-24 God’s Ideal** – We finish Isaiah with one last glimpse at the glories of the mountain of God, the New Jerusalem. God will make a sign among the remnant and the nations will come to Jerusalem and become priests and Levites. Those who have changed their ways and thoughts will see the glory of God. All mankind will bow to God, but those who transgressed will be punished; their worm and fire will not die.

IV. The Message of Isaiah 56-66

- A. **To the Contemporaries of Isaiah** – In this section of Isaiah, God contrasts the wickedness and superficial religion of Isaiah’s day with his ideal for his people and speaks of a day when he would accomplish his goal through anointed Servant Jesus. For Israelites in Isaiah’s day, this section serves as a plea for a true change of heart, an adoption of Jehovah’s words and ways.

¹⁷ Cf. 55:6-10

¹⁸ Cf. 64:9-12

¹⁹ Cf. 65:13-16

²⁰ Cf. 7:14; 9:1-7

- B. About the Church** – These chapters are also prophetic of a future age beyond the law of Moses²¹ and find fulfillment in Jesus himself (Lu. 4:16-18). Isaiah’s references to a new Jerusalem, new heavens and new earth, a new name, a new nation, etc. are all references to various aspects of God’s kingdom in Jesus Christ. Isaiah’s future glories are our current joys. Here are a handful of connections:
1. A new heavens and new earth Is. 65:16-17; 66:22 → 2Co. 5:17
 2. A new Jerusalem Is. 65:18 → Gal. 4:25-26; Heb. 12:22-23
 3. A new priesthood Is. 66:21 → 1Pe. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:9-10
 4. Peace among God’s people Is. 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 66:20 → Eph. 2:13-22
 5. Marriage with God Is. 62:4-5 → Eph. 5:22-33
 6. Nations coming to the new Jerusalem Is. 65:1-2 → Ro. 10:20-21
- C. About Heaven** – While these joys are currently ours in the church, the New Testament writers use Isaiah’s language again to point to the next great, future transition (and judgment).
1. Just as we are brought into the kingdom when we become Christians (Mt. 16:28; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6, 9; 5:10), but look forward to fuller realization of that kingdom (2Ti. 4:18; 2Pe. 1:10-11; 1Co. 15:50), New Testament writers accept the promises in Isaiah as current joy, but also look for greater fulfillment of these promises in our future.
 2. Peter – Is. 65:16-17 → 2Pe. 3:3-15
 3. John – Is. 65:16-18 → Rev. 20:11; 21:1-8, 10, 22-27
 4. Paul – Is. 66:15-17 → 2Th. 1:7-10
 5. Gospels – Is. 66:24 → Mt. 3:12; Mar. 9:48
- D.** From Isaiah’s point of view, there may not be much of a difference between point B & C. As Young put it: “In the concept of the prophet, time and eternity, the age of the New Testament and the eternal heaven, are not sharply distinguished; and believers are already in the heavenlies” (514).

Conclusion:

- I. There are many applications from the historical context and content of Isaiah.
 - A. Warnings against wickedness and a superficial, hypocritical worship are just as appropriate for today as they were in Isaiah’s time.
 - B. The religious leaders of Isaiah’s day were called dumb dogs; they did not speak out against wickedness. We need to be courageous to preach the words and ways of God.

²¹ Eg. 56:6; 66:21 speak of foreigners becoming ministers and Levites, something that can only occur outside the scope of the Law of Moses (Heb. 7:12).

- C. We learn about true righteousness and servanthood.
- II. Isaiah’s words of a future glory encourage his contemporary readers, but they speak directly to us, the dwellers of God’s holy mountain: “Arise and shine” (60:1-8).
 - A. Be amazed at our blessing.
 - B. Be active in the work God expects of us as true servants and priests of God.
 - C. Be ready for the final fulfillment of God’s promises.

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EndLesson7