

INTRODUCTION TO 23RD BIBLEBOOK

ISAIAH (about 740-680 B.C.)(6th)

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A. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

1. The name or title of the book.

The book of Isaiah is introduced by chapter 1:1, which says, “The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz which he saw about Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” This is the *title* of the book of Isaiah. The title of the book is thus the name of the prophet whose prophecies have been gathered and recorded in this book.

The introductory verse does not mention king Manasseh. One possibility is that it was the introductory verse of an earlier part or version of the present book of Isaiah, but later became the introductory verse of the whole book of Isaiah. Another possibility is that Manasseh’s name was left omitted, because Isaiah probably no longer prophesied publicly during his reign and died during his reign.

Nevertheless, the title has reference to the main contents of the book. The name *Isaiah* (Hebrew: Jesajahu) means *the salvation of the LORD*. His name also characterises his ministry, in which he continually emphasised that only the LORD can save and that all human help is in vain. “Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Saviour (43:10-11).”

2. The assumption that Isaiah had two or three authors.

There are learned men who think that the book Isaiah is composed of two or even three different writers. They consider:

- chapters 1-39 as *Isaiah 1*
- chapters 40-55 (or 40-66) as *Isaiah 2*
- chapters 56-66 as *Isaiah 3*.

They base their view on the assumption that prophecies concerning the future are impossible and that therefore these so-called prophecies were recorded after the events actually occurred. They say that there must have been two or three different writers, because they took their historical point of view as being *before, during* and *after* the exile. Subsequently, they assume that Isaiah 1-39 was composed *long before the exile* in Judah, Isaiah 40-55 (or 66) must have been composed *during the exile* in Babylon and Isaiah 56-66 must have been composed *after the exile* in Judah.

If it were true that Isaiah 40-66 were written by an unknown writer called Isaiah 2 and written during the exile, then it would be a remarkable phenomenon that the Jews knew this famous person who prophesied these wonderful prophecies contained in chapters 40-66, possessed his prophecies in a book and still did not remember his name!

3. The writer of the book.

Both the internal evidence as well as the Jewish tradition ascribes *the whole book* to our prophet Isaiah, who lived in the period of king Uzziah to Manasseh. Isaiah prophesied during the reign of five kings of Judah. He began his ministry during the reign of king Uzziah (787-737 B.C.) and most probably ended it under king Manasseh (684-641 B.C.). Since Isaiah recorded the death of king Sennacherib in 681 B.C., it is fair to assume that Isaiah lived till about 680 B.C. Thus, he prophesied over a period of about 60 years.

The title or introductory verse does not say who finally gathered all Isaiah’s prophecies together and composed one book of them. For Christians it is not important to know *who* wrote every single verse in a Bible book or who composed a book in the Bible in its final form, but it is important to believe that both the contents and composition of every Bible book was the work of the Holy Spirit!¹

God himself commanded Isaiah to record the prophecies God gave to him. “The LORD said to me, “Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen ... (8:1).” Isaiah did not stand alone, but *had a group of disciples around him* (8:16-18). Throughout his long life and ministry, his growing number of prophecies were collected and bound together in a volume, most probably by these disciples and under Isaiah’s direction. Because it does not record his death, it was probably completed in its present form before the end of his life, that is, by 680 B.C. The groups of prophecies are arranged either chronologically or thematically.

¹ 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16

His wife was a prophetess and he had two sons, whose names were prophetic messages to Israel:

- ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ means that Israel would soon be deported with all their possessions to Assyria (721 B.C.).
- ‘Shear-jashub’ means that only a remnant of the people of God would return from exile (8:3; 7:3).

According to Jewish tradition, Isaiah was martyred to death under Manasseh. It says that Isaiah was placed inside a hollow tree trunk and then sawed in two. This tradition may be true, because Manasseh shed very much innocent blood² and some believers in the living God were sawed in two³.

B. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

The book of Isaiah may be divided into four major parts:

1. Isaiah 1-6. The period under Uzziah and Jotham (740-737 B.C.).

Theme: “Judgement and promise.”

King Uzziah reigned for 52 years from 788 to 737 B.C. During his last 13 years he was a leper and was excluded from all business of state and his son Jotham reigned in his stead. King Jotham reigned from 750 to 737 B.C. Their reign is described in 2 Chronicles 26-27. The first 5 chapters of Isaiah fit the situation described in 2 Chronicles perfectly. A century before Uzziah, Israel and Judah had suffered much from Aram (Syria). But during the reign of Uzziah, Israel experienced a time of power and prosperity. Nevertheless, Israel rebelled against the LORD and turned their backs on him. Although Assyria is only mentioned for the first time in the second part under king Ahaz, Isaiah’s ministry begins together with the upcoming Assyrian Empire⁴. Isaiah received his call as prophet during the year that Uzziah died, that is in 737 B.C.

2. Isaiah 7-12. The period under king Ahaz (737-727 B.C.).

Theme: “The contrast between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.”

King Ahaz reigned for 6 years and 10 months from 734 to 727 B.C. His reign is described in 2 Chronicles 28. He was completely depraved, promoted gross idolatry and wickedness in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD. Therefore the LORD allowed king Rezin of Aram (Syria) and king Pekah of the northern kingdom of Israel to invade the southern kingdom of Judah and defeat it.

3. Isaiah 13-39. The period under king Hezekiah (727- 685 B.C.).

Theme: “The contrast between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.”

King Hezekiah reigned for 42 years from 727 to 685 B.C. For the first 13 years, he reigned under a guardian (727-714 B.C.). He reigned alone from 714-695 and together with his son Manasseh from 695-685 B.C. His reign is described in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 29-32. He did what was good, right and faithful in the eyes of God. In everything he did, he sought God and worked wholeheartedly⁵. He was godly and a great reformer: He restored the temple and the worship in the temple of the LORD, re-instituted the Passover festival and destroyed idolatry all over Judah and Israel.

During the 6th year of his reign under a guardian, that is in 721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was deported to Assyria by Sargon (722-705 B.C.). Sargon lost a battle against Elam and this sparked a revolt against Assyria among the nations in the west.

When Hezekiah began to rule alone in 714 B.C., he tended to side with the western nations against Assyria. Around 700 B.C., Judah was indeed invaded by Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) of Assyria. Hezekiah paid the required tribute to Assyria by stripping the LORD’s temple of all its treasures⁶. Then in desperation, he sought the help of Egypt against Assyria⁷.

But Isaiah preached against this un-theocratic political alliance and warned that this was not the way to escape the Assyrian yoke⁸. Egypt did not help and finally, the Assyrian army stood before Jerusalem’s walls. The Assyrian general

² 2 Kings 21:16

³ Hebrews 11:37

⁴ The Assyrian king Tiglat-Pileser III (745 - 727 B.C.) was a very successful leader in the ancient world.

His reformation of conquered countries included the following:

- Massive deportations, especially of the elite.
- Rebuilding cities according to Assyrian style
- Installing an Assyrian governor
- Building Assyrian forts and installing garrisons
- Enforcing a uniform tax system
- Compulsory military service
- Introducing a uniform system of measurements and weights
- Introducing a single religious cult
- Enforcing one lingua Franca: Aramaic
- The remaining people became Assyrian citizens
- All economy was incorporated into the state economy

⁵ 2 Chronicles 31:20-21

⁶ 2 Kings 18:13-16

⁷ 2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6

⁸ Isaiah 30:1-5; 31:1

mocked God (36:18-20; 37:10-13). Together with the prophet Isaiah, king Hezekiah prayed about this and an angel of the LORD put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp (37:14-37)⁹.

During this period, Hezekiah became mortally sick. God heard his prayer and saw his tears and promised to add 15 years to his life. The sign that God would do what he had promised was to make the shadow cast by the sun go back the 10 steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz (38:1-8).

After his recovery, Hezekiah made an ill-considered display of the treasures of the temple in the storehouses to some Babylonian envoys. At this time, Babylon was only a subject province of the Assyrian Empire. The prophet Isaiah predicted that Israel together with all its treasures would be taken into exile to Babylon (39:6-7).

Isaiah's ministry is very much characterised by the contrast between the actions of the worldly powers represented by Assyria and Egypt and the kingdom of God represented by Jerusalem, which is still a shadow of what is to come (during the New Testament period).

4. Isaiah 40-66. The period under king Manasseh (685-641 B.C.)

Theme: "Comfort for God's people (the new community)".

King Manasseh reigned for 55 years. The first 11 years, he reigned under his father Hezekiah. He reigned alone for 44 years from 685-641 B.C. His reign is described in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33. Under his reign, a strong tide of reaction set in against the strict worship of the LORD during the previous reign. Manasseh did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD and led Israel astray so that Israel did more evil than the Canaanite nations which the LORD had destroyed¹⁰. Isaiah lived to see the undoing of all his work so far as contemporary politics was concerned (not to depend on Egypt).

In spiritual matters, Israel fell in even greater depravity than under the reign of Ahaz. Isaiah realised that God's judgement of Israel was inevitable. Manasseh promoted so much idolatry in Israel that it became fashionable. The prophet challenges the idolaters: "To whom will you compare God? What image will you compare him to" (40:18)? "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were ... or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds ... Do something, whether good or bad (41:21-23)." God declares: "I will not give my glory to another (god)" (42:8). "All who make idols are nothing" (44:9).

During Manasseh's reign, Isaiah concentrated his prophecies increasingly on the coming overthrow of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, the exile to Babylon and, for the sake of the faithful remnant, also on the return from exile.

This condition explains Isaiah's tremendous emphasis on prophesying against the idols and on prophesying the uniqueness and sovereignty of the LORD. The inevitable judgement coming to apostate Israel, logically led to the recording of the LORD's prophecies concerning vicarious atonement. *Apart from vicarious atonement there could be no reasonable hope for the survival of the genuine people of God in Israel. This explains Isaiah's emphasis on the coming Servant of the LORD and his work of salvation.*

C. PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH THAT ARE BOUND UP AND SEALED.

In Isaiah 8:16, the LORD says to his prophet Isaiah, "Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples." The context is the contrast between the mass of people in Israel who have hardened their hearts against the LORD and Isaiah together with a small group of believers who have grouped themselves around him. *The testimony is the solemn announcement of future revelations and the law is the instruction of how to live in the light of these future revelations, which is to trust, revere and obey the LORD. Binding together and sealing these future revelations and practical instructions means to gather them together in a written record and to engrave their contents in the hearts of his disciples.* These disciples are those in Israel whom Isaiah calls *the remnant*, those who remain faithful to the LORD and who, according to Romans 9:6, are *the true Israel*. Isaiah records his prophecies especially for this remnant of Israel.

God's prophecies regarding the future of Israel and his promises made to Israel are *not to the natural nation of Israel*, but are to this *faithful believing remnant in Israel*. "Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors we would have become like Sodom" and Gomorrah (1:9). Isaiah undoubtedly proclaimed God's words to all the people of the nation Israel, but he knew that God's words would have no effect on the great mass of people in the nation Israel. "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused, make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed (6:9-10)."

The prophet says, "I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty (8:17-18)."

Isaiah says that *the faithful remnant in Israel, which included his wife and two sons, are in a sense a type during the Old Testament time of Jesus Christ and the Church*. "I will put my trust in him. ... Here am I, and the children God has given me¹¹." Thus, it is quite possible, that during his life-time, Isaiah recorded his prophecies, but did not speak all his

⁹ 2 Chronicles 32:20-21

¹⁰ 2 Chronicles 33:9

¹¹ Hebrews 2:13

prophecies in public (cf. 6:9-10). It is quite possible that a great part of Isaiah's prophecies were known only to his circle of disciples, to the faithful remnant in Israel, who also kept these records safe for later generations.

D. PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH ARE REAL PROPHECIES (PREDICTIONS)

1. The prophecies recorded in Isaiah are real and possible.

The view that prophecies concerning the future are impossible, must be rejected on bases of biblical evidence. Biblical examples of fulfilled prophecy:

Israelites enslaved in Egypt. The LORD showed Abraham (between 2092-2082 B.C.) in his sleep that his descendants would be strangers in a country not their own. There they would be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years. Then they would come out with great possessions¹². This prophecy was fulfilled in Israel's enslavement in Egypt until the exodus from Egypt¹³.

Israelites abandoned God's covenant. Moses (1407 B.C.) saw Israel's future. The Israelites would abandon God's covenant and the LORD would uproot them from their land and thrust them into a strange land¹⁴. This prophecy was fulfilled when after the period of kings Israel went into exile to Babylon (586 B.C.)¹⁵.

The golden calf altar at Bethel. King Jeroboam (932-911 B.C.) erected a golden calf idol at Bethel, installed idolatrous priests and sacrificed calves. A prophet prophesied that later a certain king named *Josiah* would come and sacrifice the idolatrous priest on this altar and desecrate it¹⁶. *About 300 years later*, king Josiah (638-608 B.C.) went to Bethel, burned the bones of dead people buried around it on the altar, demolished it and ground it to powder¹⁷.

The place of birth of the Messiah. The prophet Micah (737-727 B.C.) prophesied that the coming Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem¹⁸. *About 700 years later*, Jesus Christ, the Messiah was born in Bethlehem¹⁹ (about 5 B.C.).

The name of the Messiah. The prophet Isaiah (740-680 B.C.) prophesied that the name of the Messiah would be 'Immanuel' (God with us)²⁰.

If it was possible for prophets to prophesy events hundreds of years after they lived and to prophesy specific names of the Messiah and his place of birth about 700 years before he was born, then all Isaiah's prophecies are real prophecies!

King Cyrus. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that a certain king *Cyrus* would subdue nations and give the command to rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple²¹. *About 200 years later*, king Cyrus (559-529 B.C.) founded the Medo-Persian Empire, destroyed nations and gave the command to rebuilt Jerusalem and its temple²².

Therefore the structure of the book Isaiah cannot be based on the assumption that prophesying concerning the future is impossible.

2. The internal evidence of Isaiah 40-66 prove that it was just as Isaiah 1-39 composed in Palestine before the exile.

The writer's viewpoint is clearly from Palestine looking towards the east. Isaiah 46:11 says "From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfil my purpose" (52:11). In Isaiah 40:9 and 62:6 the writer spoke in the knowledge that the cities of Judah and Jerusalem were still standing. And in Isaiah 58:6 he mentions that their courts of law were still functioning. But the most decisive objection against a date during or after the exile for the composition of chapters 40-66 is *the numerous references to idolatry in this section*. Chapters 40-66 accurately describes the infamous types of idolatry which was practised during the time of king Manasseh (684-641 B.C.). Compare 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33 with Isaiah chapter 44:9-20; 57:4-7; 65:2-4 and 66:17. The hilly or mountainous terrain on which idolatry was practised excludes Babylon as the place of description, because Babylon is a flat, alluvial terrain. Moreover, people who lived after the exile, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as well as the writers Ezra and Nehemiah, prove beyond all reasonable doubt that after the exile Judea was free from idolatry. Therefore the structure of the book Isaiah cannot be based on the assumption that a part of the book was written during the exile.

Isaiah 13 is a prophecy against Babylon, which at that time was just a small subject province in the Assyrian Empire. It prophesied that Babylon would become a great army that would bring kingdoms in turmoil, punish nations for their evil, be ruthless and arrogant, devastate Palestine and become the jewel of the nations. It also prophesied that Babylon would eventually be conquered by the Medes (13:17). Also Isaiah 46-47 prophesies the fall of Babylon. Therefore, the writer of both sections is one and the same person.

¹² Genesis 15:12-14

¹³ Exodus 12:40-42

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 29:22-28

¹⁵ 2 Chronicles 36:14-21; Jeremiah 31:31-32

¹⁶ 1 Kings 12:25-13:3

¹⁷ 2 Kings 23:15-16

¹⁸ Micah 5:2

¹⁹ Matthew 2:1-6

²⁰ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

²¹ Isaiah 44:28; 45:1

²² Ezra 1:1-4

3. The New Testament writers regard the writer of chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66 as one and the same person.

Also the writers of the New Testament regard both Isaiah chapters 1-39 as well as chapters 40-66 as being from one prophet called Isaiah. *The most notable is John 12:38-41 which quotes chapter 53:1 and 6:9-10 as being from one and the same prophet Isaiah! We conclude that the book of Isaiah is a unity.* It does not consist of 2 or 3 books written by different writers.

E. PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH PREDICTING THE FUTURE.

The question that caused people to differ with one another about the author of the book Isaiah is, “How can a person prophesy so accurately about events that were literally fulfilled about 150-200 years later?” Especially in chapters 40-66, the prophet speaks of the Babylonian exile (605-536 B.C.) and the Persian king Cyrus (559-529 B.C.): his victories over nations, his conquering of Babel (539 B.C.) and his allowing the Jews to return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple²³. The answer given by certain people is that these prophecies were written *after* these events happened.

However, the Bible consistently teaches that *the prophets were supernaturally and divinely inspired to predict events that would happen hundreds of years before these events happened.* The writer deliberately says that he is prophesying in the sense of predicting future events.

In Isaiah 41:22-29, the prophet Isaiah *challenged the idols* to foretell what would happen in the future, but they could not (45:21; 42:8-9)! Then he says that the LORD was the first to foretell through his prophet Isaiah that a mighty king Cyrus would come from the east and the north to conquer nations. In Isaiah 43:9-13, the prophet says that the LORD *challenged all the nations* to proclaim what would happen in the future, but also they could not! Only the nation Israel could witness that what the LORD had prophesied in the past had actually happened.

In Isaiah 44:6-8, the prophet says that the LORD *challenged anyone in the universe or in history* to foretell what would happen in the future, but there was no one like the LORD! In Isaiah 44:28-45:4, the prophet says that the LORD would summon king Cyrus, who himself does not know the LORD, to accomplish what the LORD has decided would happen in history.

The LORD would command this king Cyrus to subdue many nations, including the nation that would oppress Israel in exile, and let Jerusalem and its temple be rebuilt. The LORD mentions this Cyrus by name for the sake of the believing remnant of Israel, so that they may know that only the God of the Bible is God and that he has chosen the believing remnant to be his people. In Isaiah 46:10-11, the LORD says through his prophet, “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. ... What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do’.” And in Isaiah 48:3 and 6, the LORD says through his prophet that he foretold the things that have already happened in the past. Now he is foretelling them new things that no one can know. They will certainly happen in the future.

F. PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH WITH A DIFFERENT HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW.

But how do we explain the fact certain prophecies *seem* to have been spoken after Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, that is, that these prophecies *seem* to have been spoken *during* the exile (605-536 B.C.)? For example, Isaiah 51:3 and 52:9 speak of Jerusalem as a place of ruins and desolation. Isaiah 42:22,24 speak of Israel as a people plundered, looted, trapped and imprisoned, or as a people who are captives, with no one to rescue them or send them back to their own country. Thus, it speaks of Israel as already living in exile. Isaiah 43:14 says that the LORD would send Cyrus to conquer Babylon (46:1). Isaiah 66:8,20 speaks of Israelites returning to Jerusalem and of the rebirth of the nation Israel. And Isaiah 44:26-28 says that the towns of Judah, Jerusalem and the temple would again be rebuilt and inhabited.

The answer that some people give is that another prophet, called *Isaiah 2*, wrote these prophecies during the exile. However, the best answer is to regard these prophecies as prophecies of our own prophet Isaiah. Remember, the prophets in the Bible were inspired by God himself. God himself made the far away future known through his prophets. *Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the prophet Isaiah sees with his spiritual eyes the historical reality as it will be in the future! He speaks as if these future events have already taken place in order to emphasise the absolute certainty that these events will happen!* The Holy Spirit transfers the prophet in his spirit to the time of the exile, gives him insight into the conditions of the exiles, makes him feel both angry with the sin of the exiles and makes him feel empathy with the exiles.

The Holy Spirit gives the prophet the ability to identify himself with the exiles in the future and make new revelations that pertain to their rescue from exile. Thus, *the Babylonian prophecies take their historical point of view, not in the time the prophet himself lives, but in the time of the future Babylonian exile.*

G. PROPHECIES THAT ARE FULFILLED IN HISTORY.

When God’s judgements as punishment and his subsequent redemption is solemnly announced by special revelation long before the actual occurrence of the fulfilment, then it proves that the LORD is the only true and sovereign God.

²³ Ezra 1:1-4

1. Fulfillments of prophecies within a few years of prediction.

Isaiah 37:21-35 prophesies Jerusalem's deliverance from the power of king Sennacherib of Assyria by supernatural means. Three years later an angel of the LORD put to death 185,000 soldiers within the Assyrian camp within one night. And the Assyrian army returned to Assyria. This prophecy was literally fulfilled!

2. Fulfillments of prophecies long after Isaiah's death.

All his prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the exile to Babylon, the acts of king Cyrus as God's instrument of punishment and rescue, the return of the exiles to Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple belong to such prophecies. All these prophecies were literally fulfilled!

King Manasseh promoted idolatry and tried to annihilate the service of the LORD. The purpose of the extensive and precise prophecies concerning Babylon was to confirm in later generations that the prophet Isaiah's message was indeed the message of the living God. Their purpose was *to show that God is sovereign over all the affairs of man*. Their purpose was to prove that what was happening in history to all the nations as well as to Judah, was not due to the power of mighty nations like Babylon, but was due to the decree of the Sovereign God. God purposed to punish his covenant people, Israel and Judah, by exile. He also purposed to rescue the faithful believing remnant by means of king Cyrus. It is quite impossible for any keen political analyst or anyone else to predict precisely events 150 to 200 years before their occurrence! Fulfilled prophecies prove that only the God of the Bible *is God* and that he is the *sovereign* God!

3. Fulfillments of the Messianic prophecies.

All Isaiah's prophecies concerning the first coming of the Messiah were literally fulfilled! This gives great assurance to the faithful today that also Isaiah's prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ will also be literally fulfilled!

H. PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

1. Prophecies concerning the first and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah made several very important prophecies about the coming Messiah. As a prophet in the Old Testament, he saw the two comings of Jesus Christ in the future as one looks through a telescope at distant mountain ranges. He could only see mountain ranges one behind the other, but he could not see the distance between these mountain ranges. Likewise, Isaiah saw the coming of Jesus Christ, but he *could not see that there were two comings* of Jesus Christ and he *could also not see the long period of time between* the first and second coming of Christ.

2. Specific prophecies about Jesus Christ in the book of Isaiah.

(1) Prophecies concerning Christ's birth.

Isaiah 9:6 says that a child would be born. Isaiah 7:14 says that a virgin would give birth to a son and call his name Immanuel, which means *God with us*. The fulfilment is described in Matthew 1:21.

(2) Prophecy concerning Christ's family.

Isaiah 11:1 says that Christ would be born in the family of king David (son of Jesse). The fulfilment is described in Matthew 1:1.

(3) Prophecies concerning Christ's anointing.

Isaiah 11:2 says that the Spirit of the LORD would rest on Christ. And it would be a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. The fulfilment is described in Matthew 3:16-17. Isaiah 61:1-2 says that because of this anointing with the Spirit, Christ would preach the good news, bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim a time of God's favour and grace. The fulfilment began in Luke 4:14-21.

(4) Prophecies concerning Christ's attributes.

Isaiah 9:6 says that the government would be on Christ's shoulders and that Christ would be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

- The government would be on his shoulders: Matthew 28:18 says that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ. And Matthew 8 describes how he had authority over every sickness, over every evil spirit and over the forces of nature.
- He would be the Wonderful Counsellor. Matthew 7:29 says that Jesus Christ taught as one who had authority and not as the teachers of the law. And Matthew 22:46 says that Christ gave such good counsel that no one could say a word in reply and no one dared to ask him any more questions that tried to trap him.
- He would be the Mighty God. In Colossians 1:15, Paul says that Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. And in Colossians 2:9, he says that all the fullness of God dwells in Christ even in his bodily form.
- He would be the Everlasting Father. In John 10:30 Christ says that he and the Father are one. And in John 14:7-10 Christ says that whoever knows Jesus Christ also knows God the Father. Whoever has seen Jesus Christ has seen God the Father. Jesus Christ is in God the Father and God the Father is in Jesus Christ.

- He would be the Prince of Peace. In Romans 5:1, Paul says that people who have been justified by faith in Christ, have peace with God. And in Ephesians 2:12-14, he says that Christ is also the only One who can make peace between people who are enemies.

(5) Prophecy concerning Christ's settling in Capernaum:

Isaiah 9:1-2 says that in the future the LORD would honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness, that is the Gentiles, would see a great light. Matthew 4:12-17 says that when Jesus went to live in Capernaum, this prophecy was literally fulfilled.

(6) Prophecy concerning Christ's gentleness:

Isaiah 42:1-4 says that the Messiah would be a servant, he would not shout in the street, he would not get discouraged by the persecutions he suffers, he would not discourage the sick and broken people in the world, he would bring justice to the nations and the nations would put their hope on him. All this has been fulfilled: Mark 10:45 says that Jesus came not to be served but to serve. Matthew 12:14-21 says that he did not fight for his rights, but was also not stopped to do what was right in God's eyes: He helped the sick and helpless people and he preached the good news to them.

(7) Prophecies concerning Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 says that Jesus Christ would be despised and rejected. He would be pierced on the cross for our transgressions. He would be punished for our sins. He would be buried in a grave of a rich man. After his death he would see the light of life. He would justify very many people. He would be lifted up and highly exalted. He would intercede for sinners. The Gospels and the letters of Paul teach how all this was literally fulfilled.

(8) Prophecies concerning Christ's glorious reign.

Isaiah 11:10 and 65:1 say that people from all nations would rally to Christ. Isaiah 11:3-5 and 32:1-2 say that Christ would reign in righteousness, that he would certainly slay the wicked and that he would do justice to the oppressed, and that his people would be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:17 describe the new heaven and new earth, that is, the kingdom of God in its final manifestation.

3. Prophecies concerning the Servant of the LORD.

Modern Jews identify the servant of the LORD with the natural nation of Israel. This view cannot be maintained, because a nation cannot suffer vicariously for its own sins, cannot be crucified on a cross or buried with a certain rich man. The only satisfactory explanation of all these prophecies is to explain the concept of the servant of the LORD separately in each context.

- In some passages, the concept represents the nation of Israel as a whole
- in others passages it represents only the faithful remnant of believers in Israel
- and finally in other passages it represents only the LORD Jesus Christ.

(1) The nation of Israel as God's servant.

The word 'servant' is in the singular. Isaiah 41:8-9 relates that in contrast to people serving idols, Israel is called God's chosen servant to serve the living God. Isaiah 43:10 says that Israel is reminded that their calling and task is to be God's witnesses on earth. However, Isaiah 42:19 relates that Israel is accused of being blind to God's works and deaf to God's words and therefore would be sent into exile. Isaiah 45:1-4 promises that king Cyrus would be summoned to save Israel from their captivity in Babylon (48:20). And according to Isaiah 44:1-5, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people in Israel, people from the Gentiles would also join themselves to the true God of Israel and take on the name of 'Israel' (44:5). This is a prophecy concerning Gentile proselytes joining the nation of Israel as well as a prophecy concerning Pentecost and Gentiles joining God's new community called the Church, which in the New Testament is called 'the Israel of God'²⁴.

(2) The remnant of genuine believers in Israel as God's servants.

The word 'servants' is in the plural. In Isaiah 44:26 *the prophets are collectively God's servant*. In Isaiah 54:16-17 the servants are the individual members of Israel. Whatever happens to them is determined by God and not by their attackers or accusers. In Isaiah 63:16-17 the servants are those who acknowledge God as Father. In Isaiah 65:8-10 the servants are the faithful chosen remnant of Israel in contrast to the obstinate and idolatrous Israelites. They are the holy seed that are left as a tree stump (6:13), but would later flourish (66:14).

(3) The LORD Jesus Christ as the Servant of the LORD.

Isaiah 49:3 teaches that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would be *the true Israel*. Only in him would God display his splendour and fulfil his eternal plan of salvation.

Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8 teaches that Jesus Christ would be *the covenant for Israel*. This means that God's covenant with Israel is completely bound up in Jesus Christ. All the promises and blessings made to Israel could only be realised and

²⁴ Galatians 6:16

*experienced in relationship with Jesus Christ*²⁵. Jesus Christ would be filled with the Holy Spirit and bring justice to the nations in the world (42:1-7) and God's light and salvation to the ends of the earth (49:1-7). Nations would despise and abhor him, but eventually all the kings and rulers on earth would bow down before him.

In Isaiah 50:4-11 the Messiah himself speaks of the suffering he would bear: people would beat him on his back, pull out his beard, mock him and spit him in his face. Nevertheless, he would not give in to them, because God himself would vindicate him.

Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 says that the Servant of the LORD would be despised and rejected, pierced on the cross for our transgressions, buried in a grave of a rich man, resurrected from the dead, exalted in heaven from where he would intercede for many and justify many people.

extra

I. THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

1. Isaiah 1-6 may be divided into 4 sections:

Chapter 1. Rebellious and corrupt Israel is judged.

The sinful nation and corrupt children (during the time of Isaiah) have forsaken the LORD (1:2-4). Israel is called Sodom and Gomorrah (1:10). The LORD says to Israel, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings" (1:13-15). The LORD will make your sins white as snow (that is, forgive all your sins)(1:16-19). Jerusalem has become a harlot and the leaders rebels (1:21-23). After avenging himself on his enemies, the LORD will restore Jerusalem to become the city of righteousness (1:24-31).

Chapter 2-4. The true and the false glory of Israel.

"In the last days (= the Messianic Age) ... all nations will stream to the mountain of the LORD's temple (= the LORD's new community, the Church). From Jerusalem the Word of God will go out to all the nations and those who listen will beat their swords into ploughshares (2:1-5). However, in Isaiah's day Israel is full of superstitions, the land is full of idolatry, the people are proud and arrogant and practise occultism. The LORD will humble them (2:6-22). Jerusalem and Judah will be judged (ch. 3). The LORD will judge Israel's leaders (3:12-15) and women (3:16 - 4:1). In the Messianic Age the new community will be cleansed and protected (4:2-6).

(Chapter 5. Unfruitful and corrupt Israel threatened by attack by distant nations and exile.

Israel is the LORD's vineyard, but full of bloodshed and distress (5:1-7). God's anger burns against the unrighteous who call evil good, put darkness for light and bitter for sweet (5:20). Therefore Israel will go into exile to Assyria. Tiglath Pileser from that distant nation is already in Syria approaching Judah (5:8-30).

Chapter 6. Isaiah's calling and commission.

In a vision Isaiah saw the LORD seated in heaven He called Isaiah to be a prophet (737 B.C.). He must especially preach judgement: those who have hardened their hearts will no longer be able to see, hear, understand, turn and be healed (6:1-10).

2. Isaiah 7-12 may be divided into 4 sections:

Chapter 7:1 - 9:7. Two kinds of helpers: the nations of the world or God.

God sent the prophet Isaiah to exhort king Ahaz to trust in the LORD and not in the king of Assyria. The sign would be a young woman giving birth to a boy called Immanuel (God with us) (7:14). But Ahaz refused the evidence upon which his faith might have been established and instead depended on Tiglath-Pileser to rescue him from Aram and Israel. Assyria punished the city of Damascus in Aram in 734 B.C. and the city of Samaria in Israel in 732 B.C. (7:16). Instead of Assyria becoming the means of rescuing Judah, as Ahaz had hoped, it became God's means to punish Judah. 65 years later (7:8), in 669 B.C., Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) and Ashurbanipal (669-631 B.C.) colonized Israel with foreign people²⁶. They turned the land of milk and honey and thousand vines into briars and thorns (7:17-25). Because Judah rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah (a symbol for the LORD's people)²⁷ the LORD brought the mighty floodwaters of the River Euphrates (a symbol for the Assyrians) to swirl over Judah (called Immanuel here). Although Assyria devised a strategy, it would be thwarted.

'God is with us' (the believing remnant, not with those relying on Assyria)(8:1-10). God warns not to follow the way of people who call everything 'a conspiracy' (fake news) or to fear such people. The LORD is the One people must fear. He will be a sanctuary only for the believing remnant, but a stone that causes both houses of Israel to fall (8:11-22). The prophet and his disciples are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD. They must bind up (preserve) God's revelation and never consult mediums and spiritists (8:16-22). God humbles Israel by its deportation to Assyria (734 B.C.), but in the future will honour Galilee of the Gentiles: they will see a great Light (the Messiah). The government will be the shoulders of this Messiah and he will reign in his Messianic (New Testament) kingdom forever (9:1-7).

Chapter 9:8 - 10:4. God's upraised hand is against the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim).

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:20

²⁶ Ezra 4:2

²⁷ John 9:7

Because they did not seek the LORD, the LORD will cut off from them both head (elders and prominent men) and tail (prophets who tell lies misleading people). The land of Israel will be scorched and the people will be fuel for the fire. They will eat one another's flesh (9:8-21). Woe to those who make unjust laws and oppressive decrees in order to withhold justice from people. They will cringe among the captives in exile to Assyria (10:1-4).

Chapter 10:5-34. God's judgement of Assyria.

Assyria is God's rod of anger and God's club of wrath, sent against godless nations like Israel and Judah, to deal with their images. When the LORD has finished his work against Zion and Jerusalem, he will punish the king of Assyria (10:12).

When Assyria boasts that he removes the boundaries of nations, subdues their kings and plunders their treasures, he is the axe that raises itself above the one who swings it (10:15). The LORD will send a wasting disease upon Assyria's soldiers, a blazing flame will consume their thorns and destroy their forests (10:16-19). In that day (of punishing Assyria), the remnant of Israel will return to the Mighty God²⁸ (10:20-23). In that day the yoke on their neck will be broken (10:27).

Chapter 11-12. The exaltation of the Kingdom of God.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a Branch (the Messiah) will appear (11:1). The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him (11:2-3). His final judgement will be righteous (11:4-5) and he will renew the earth (11:6-9). In that day (when the exiles return) the LORD will reclaim the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia and Hamath (the four quarters of the earth). He will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian Sea and break the Euphrates River into seven streams, so that there will be a highway for the remnant of his people from Assyria and Egypt to return (11:10-16). In that day the believing remnant will say, "The LORD is my strength, song and salvation." In that day they will give thanks and proclaim to all the world what the LORD has done. They will shout aloud and sing for joy (12:1-6).

3. Isaiah 13-39 may be divided into 5 major sections:

(1) Chapters 13-23. Prophecies concerning God's judgement of specific Gentile nations.

Chapter 13-14. Against Babylon.

The judgement of Babylon is figurative, a type of the Last Judgement. Babylon represents the world power. The day of the LORD is the day of God's wrath (13:9). Sun, moon and stars will be darkened (13:10). God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins and put an end to the arrogant and ruthless (13:11). The LORD will stir up the Medes (Cyrus) and overthrow Babylon (539 B.C.)(13:17-22).

Then the LORD will once again choose Israel and settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them (14:1). The fall of the king of Babylon is described in terms of the fall of Satan (14:3-20). The king's wicked generation will perish with him (14:21-23). God's plan for all nations will be carried out (14:24-27).

Chapter 15-16. Against the Moabites.

In 734 B.C. Tiglath Pileser carried the trans Jordan Israel into exile and Moabites settled in their place. "Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees, give them shelter from the destroyer. The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land. In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it, one from the house of David, one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness (= Hezekiah as a type of Jesus Christ)(16:3-5)! When the Moabites appear at their high place, she only wears herself out; when she goes to her shrine to pray, it is to no avail" (16:12). In 715 B.C. the Assyrian invasion against Arab tribes affected Moab (16:14).

Chapter 17. Against the Arameans.

The remnant of Aram will be like the glory (the harvests) of the Israelites: it will be shattered, laid waste and their wealth will be carried away as plunder. Only a few olives will remain on the trees (17:3-6).

The army of the Assyrians consisted of many different nations. "The raging of the nations is like the roaring of great waters". When God rebukes them, they flee away, driven before the wind like tumbleweed before a gale. This is fulfilled in Isaiah 37:36 (17:12-14).

²⁸ In Isaiah 9:6 'the Mighty God' is Jesus Christ!

Chapter 18. Against Cush (Upper Egypt/Sudan/Ethiopia).

In 715 B.C. these tall and smooth-skinned people, an aggressive nation, feared far and wide, whose land is divided by rivers, sent envoys by papyrus boats across the Nile to persuade Judah towards an anti-Assyrian alliance. Just before the Assyrians reached their goal, they will be cut off with pruning knives. They will submit to the LORD and honour him with gifts (18:1-7).

Chapter 19. Against Egypt.

Judgement and salvation. Civil war raged between many city kingdoms before Shabaka. He reigned ca. 712 - ca. 696 B.C., the Nubian king who established the 25th Dynasty in Lower Egypt and thus became the first of the 'Ethiopian' pharaohs. The Egyptians will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists, but the LORD will bring their plans to nothing, hand them over to a cruel master and they will lose heart (19:3-4). The Egyptian canals will stink, their fields will be parched and Pharaoh's wise counsellors will give senseless advice. The gods of Egypt cannot make known what the LORD planned against Egypt. The LORD makes the leaders of Zoan and Memphis fools. He will cause Egypt to stagger around in his vomit.

During the 2nd century B.C. many Judeans/Jews came to live in Egypt. In that day 5 cities of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan (Hebrew) and swear alliance to the LORD. There will be an altar and a monument (obelisk) erected to the LORD in the heart of Egypt.

The son of the high priest Onias III fled to Egypt and in about 160 B.C. with permission of the Egyptian king Ptolemy VI Philometre built a temple in accordance with the Jerusalem temple at Leontopolis in the Nile Delta. It stood till 72 B.C. *In the 2nd century B.C. the Old Testament was translated in Greek (the Septuagint).* The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians.

They will turn to the LORD and the LORD will heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria (where many Jews lived after the exile). The Assyrians will worship together with the Egyptians. And Israel will be the third nation, a blessing on earth. The LORD will bless (the believers) in Egypt as 'my people', in Assyria as 'my handiwork and in Israel as 'my inheritance' (19:18-25). *This is an Old Testament type of 'destroying the dividing wall of hostility' in Ephesians 2:14-18.*

Chapter 20. Against Egypt and Cush.

In 713 B.C. Ashdod rebelled against Assyria and relied on the help of Egypt. God commanded Isaiah to go around stripped naked and barefoot for 3 years as a sign that the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles would be led away stripped and barefoot to Assyria (20:1-6). In 670 and 667 B.C. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal conquered Egypt.

Chapter 21. Against Babylon.

In 539 B.C. Elam and Media attacked Babylon. While the Babylonians ate and drank (21:5)²⁹, they attacked Babylon on horses and chariots, riders on donkeys and camels (21:7). "Babylon has fallen. All the images of its gods lie shattered" (21:9).

Chapter 22. Against Jerusalem.

The LORD has a day of tumult and trampling and terror, battering down walls, capturing the leaders who flee (22:2-5). Jerusalem depended on its weapons, storing up water, tearing down houses to strengthen the wall, but did not look to God who made and planned it (22:8-11). Instead they revelled in feasting, eating and drinking, saying, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (22:13)³⁰. This is a sin which will not be atoned for (22:14). Shebna, officer in charge of the palace, chiselled a tomb for himself out of rock. The LORD will depose him from his office and he will be ousted from his position. But the LORD will place on the shoulder of his servant, Eljakim, the key to the house of David. What he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open (that is, he has extreme authority and power) (22:15-22)³¹.

Chapter 23. Against Tyre.

The fortress of the sea and marketplace of the nations, a city of revelry, will be destroyed and forgotten for 70 years.

(2) Chapters 24-27. Prophecies concerning the last things, especially the judgement.

Chapter 24. Judgement of the nations on earth is figurative of the Last Judgement.

The LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the (moral, spiritual and ecological) laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore the earth's inhabitants are burned up (24:1-6). The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls – never to rise again (24:19-20).

From the ends of the earth we hear singing: Glory to the Righteous One. In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above (the demon) and the kings on the earth below. They will be shut up in prison and released after many days. The LORD will reign on Mount Zion before the elders gloriously (24:16-23).

²⁹ Daniel 5:1-2

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:22

³¹ 2 Kings 18:18; cf. Revelation 3:7-8

Chapter 25. Salvation for the nations on earth is figurative for the new earth.

On this mountain the LORD will prepare a feast for all people, a banquet. (At the first coming) he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations³². (At the second coming) he will swallow up death forever, wipe away the tears from all faces and remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth³³.

Chapter 26. The new community³⁴ enlarged by righteous nations.

We (the chosen believers) form a strong community (have a strong city). God makes salvation its walls and ramparts. Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith. You will keep in perfect peace him, whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you (26:1-3). In the night and in the morning my spirit longs for you (the LORD)(26:9). When your judgements come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness. Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness: even in a land of unrighteousness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the LORD (26:9-10)³⁵. “You have enlarged the nation. You have extended all the borders of the land”. *The Israel of God³⁶ is the New Community which is continued and enlarged/extended to include believers from the non-Jewish nations (26:15: cf. 27:6). The New Testament Church is the fulfilment of what God destined Israel to be. The Church is Israel in a higher and extended sense.*

Chapter 27. The new community fills the world with fruit.

Only after its sin has been removed (27:9), it fills the world with fruit. In that day (the Messianic Age) the LORD will slay Assyria (the Leviathan, the fleeing/gliding serpent)³⁷ and Babylonia (Leviathan, the twisting/coiling serpent)³⁸, the monster of the sea.

In that day the LORD will continually water and watch over the fruitful vineyard (his people) so that no one may harm it (27:1-3). In days to come, Jacob will take root³⁹, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the earth with fruit⁴⁰ (27:6). In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem (a prophecy about the return from exile)(27:12-13).

(3) Chapters 28-33. Isaiah’s ministry under Hezekiah, especially concerning the new community.

Chapter 28. The new community has Christ as Foundation.

In that day (the Messianic Age) the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgement, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate (28:5-6). Because priest and prophet stagger from wine, reel from beer, when they see visions and render decisions and because the tables are covered with vomit, God will speak to this people with foreign lips and strange tongues (God will use Gentiles to preach the Gospel to the Jews)(28:11)⁴¹. Although Israel entered into a covenant with death, made a lie their refuge and falsehood their hiding place, the LORD will lay a tested Cornerstone in Zion for a sure foundation (the Messiah). The one who trusts (in the Messiah) will never be dismayed. He will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line, sweep away their refuge, the lie, overflow their hiding place, and annul their covenant with death. Understanding the message will bring sheer terror to people – their bed will be too short to stretch out and their blanket too narrow to wrap around them (28:14-20). But for the one who listens and pays attention, God will teach the right way (28:26).

Chapter 29. The new community will consist of knowledgeable and transformed people.

Woe to Ariel/Jeruzalem/Mount Zion, and her cycle of festivals. She will be besieged, attacked by the hordes of all nations (29:1-7). The LORD sealed the eyes of the prophets. For them the whole vision is like words sealed in a scroll (God’s decrees remain unrevealed, not executed and not understood). The LORD says, “These people (Israel) come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of (ceremonial) rules taught by men (29:10-13). They hide their plans from the LORD, do their work in the darkness and think: “Who sees us? Who will know?” They turn things upside down as if the potter were thought to be like the clay. Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He did not make me? He knows nothing?’ (29:15-16). In that day (the Messianic Age) the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, the eyes of the blind will see and the wicked will vanish. They will acknowledge the work of the LORD’s hands, stand in awe and accept instruction (29:18-24).

³² 2 Corinthians 3:14-16

³³ Revelation 21:4

³⁴ The New Community is the Messianic Community, the New Testament Church, the Kingdom of God.

³⁵ The Kingdom of God (worldwide Church) is still a mixed community of genuine believers and nominal believers.

³⁶ Galatians 6:16

³⁷ The Tigris River

³⁸ The Euphrates River

³⁹ Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant and out of Zion a band of survivors (Isaiah 37:31-32)(Isaiah 11:1). The New Testament Church (Acts 1:8)

⁴⁰ I myself will take a shoot from the very top of the cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches (Matthew 13:31-32). All the trees of the field will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish (Ezekiel 17:22-24). The New Testament Church (Matthew 21:42-44).

⁴¹ Ezekiel 3:5-9

Chapter 30. The old community is not dependent on the LORD.

Woe to (God's) obstinate children, to those who carry out plans that are not the LORD's, forming an alliance but not by God's Spirit, heaping up sin upon sin, who go down to Egypt without consulting the LORD. Egypt brings neither help nor advantage. Egypt's help is utterly useless. She is a 'Do-nothing' (30:1-7). Write on a tablet, inscribe on a scroll that it may be an everlasting witness for the days to come. These people (Israel) are a rebellious people, deceitful children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction. Because their prophets prophesy illusions and they have rejected this message. Their sin has become like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly. It will be shattered mercilessly like pottery so that among its pieces not a fragment (potsherd) will be found to scoop coals from the hearth or water from a cistern (30:8-14).

The new community receives God's grace and victory. "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. The LORD longs to be gracious to you, he rises to show you compassion. Blessed are all who wait for him. How gracious he will be when you cry for help. As soon as he hears, he will answer. Although the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more, with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying: This is the way, walk in it (30:15-21)."

The new earth. In the day of great laughter ... streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. The moon will shine like the sun and the sunlight will be seven times brighter ... when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted (30:23-26)."

The LORD's coming to judge the nations. The LORD's tongue is a consuming fire. He shakes the nations⁴² in the sieve of destruction. His voice shatters Assyria, with his scepter he will strike them down (30:27-33).

Chapter 31. The old community will fall.

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trusts in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One or seek help from the LORD. The Egyptians are men and not God, their horses are flesh and not spirit. He who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall (31:1-3). The day the Israelites return, they will reject the idols of silver and gold their sinful hands have made. Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man (31:4-8).

Chapter 32. The outpouring of the Spirit will lead to a new creation, righteousness and peace.

When ruler rule with justice, men will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm; like streams of water in the desert and like the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land (32:2). The noble man makes noble plans and by noble deeds he stands (32:8). When the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field seems like a forest (32:15). The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever (32:17).

Chapter 33. The LORD and his righteousness will be the stability of the new community.

When the LORD fills Zion (the new community) with justice and righteousness, he will become the stability of their times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure (33:5-6). The treaty with Assyria has been broken, the envoys of peace weep bitterly, there are no travellers on the roads, the sinners in Zion are terrified and trembling grips the godless. Sinners cannot dwell with the consuming fire (the LORD). Only he who walks righteously and speaks what is right, rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil can dwell with the everlasting burning. His bread and water will never fail him (33:14-16). The eyes of the righteous will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. He will see the arrogant people (Assyrians with obscure speech and incomprehensible tongue) no more. His eyes will see (the new) Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up nor any of its ropes broken. There the LORD will be king. No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill" and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven (33:17-24).

(4) Chapters 34-35. Prophecies concerning the last things, especially the future glory of God's people.

Chapter 34. The judgment of the nations is figurative of the Last Judgement.

The LORD is angry with all nations. His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them (34:2). All the stars of the heavens will fall like withered leaves from the vine or like shrivelled figs from the fig tree and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll (34:4). The LORD has a day of vengeance to uphold the cause of Zion (the new community)(34:8). God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of desolation (Hebrew: tohu) and the plumb line of chaos (bohu) (34:11)⁴³. This has been ordered in the scroll of the LORD (34:16).

⁴² Hebrews 12:26-29

⁴³ Cf. Genesis 1:2 empty and formless

Chapter 35. The return from exile is figurative of the renewal of all things.

When the ransomed of the LORD return (from exile), entering Zion with singing and everlasting joy, sorrow and sighing will flee away, feeble hands and knees will be strengthened, eyes of the blind will be opened, ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame will leap like a deer and the mute tongue will shout for joy (35:10,3-6)⁴⁴. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sands will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs, grass, reeds and papyrus will grow (35:6-7). A highway will be there, called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in the Way⁴⁵. Only the redeemed will walk there (35:8-9).

(5) Chapters 36-39. Isaiah's ministry under Hezekiah, especially concerning the destruction of Assyria.

Chapter 36. The Assyrians threaten Jerusalem.

In 701 B.C. Sennacherib attacked the fortified cities of Judah. He taunted, "You are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of staff which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it" (36:6). "Come out to me and everyone will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern (empty promises) (36:16-17). "Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? (36:20)"

Chapter 37. God delivers Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

The palace administrator Eliakim and the secretary Shebna went to the prophet Isaiah in sackcloth. The LORD said, "Do not be afraid of what you have heard. I am going to put spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword" (37:6-7). Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, king of Egypt, was marching out against him. He sent a message to Hezekiah that he was going to destroy them completely (37:9-11). Hezekiah spread the letter with the threat out before the LORD in the temple, praying: "The Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them. For they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Deliver us so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God" (37:14-20).

The LORD said against Sennacherib, "Who have you insulted and blasphemed? Long ago I ordained and planned (what would happen) and now I have brought it to pass (37:23-26).

I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because of your insolence I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came" (37:28-29). God's sign to Hezekiah: This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come remnant and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD will accomplish this (37:30-32). "I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of David, my servant. Then the Angel of the LORD went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. Sennacherib broke camp, withdrew to Nineveh, where two of his sons murdered him while he was worshipping his god Nisroch in his temple. Esarhaddon succeeded him (37:35-38).

Chapter 38. The LORD extends Hezekiah's life.

Hezekiah became ill to the point of death. Isaiah said, "Put your house in order, because you are going to die" (38:1). Hezekiah wept and prayed, "Remember, O LORD, how I walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what good is in your eyes (38:3)." The LORD heard his prayer and added 15 years to his life. The LORD's sign to Hezekiah: "I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz (38:8). The benefit of this sickness: "You have put all my sins behind your back" (38:17). The grave cannot praise you, but the living praise you and fathers tell their children about your faithfulness (38:18-19).

Chapter 39. The exile to Babylon prophesied.

The king of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan, sent a letter to Hezekiah about his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received his envoys and showed them what was in his storehouses. Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah: "The time will surely come when all this will be carried off to Babylon, including some of your relatives, who will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (39:1-8).

4. Isaiah 40-66 may be divided into 3 major sections:

(1) Chapters 40:1 - 49:13. Prophecies about the LORD and his new community.

Chapter 40. The God of the Bible brings the gospel.

Prophecy about the forerunner (John the Baptist). He will prepare the way for the LORD (the LORD is Jesus Christ)⁴⁶ (40:1-3).

⁴⁴ Matthew 11:6

⁴⁵ see Acts 9:2

⁴⁶ Mark 1:1-3

The LORD comes in Christ to reveal himself and his glory.

Those who bring good tidings to Jerusalem introduce the LORD (40:5-10). The LORD is the shepherd. He tends his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart, gently leads those that have young (40:11)⁴⁷. The LORD is the Creator: he measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, marked off the heavens with the breadth of his hand, weighed the mountains on scales. No one instructed him, no one showed him the path of understanding (40:12-13)⁴⁸. The LORD is fearless: the nations are like a drop in a bucket, dust on the scales, they are less than nothing. The LORD is incomparable. To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to (40:15-18)? The LORD is the Ruler: sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. He spreads out the heavens like a tent. He reduces the rulers of this world to nothing; he blows on them and wither (40:21-24). He challenges the nations: To whom will compare me? Or who is my equal? Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing (40:25-26). The LORD strengthens: He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (40:27-31).

Chapter 41. The LORD helps the new community.

The LORD is the Subduer. He hands nations over to Cyrus, who turns them into dust. Idols are nailed down so it will not topple (41:1-7). The LORD is the Chooser and Helper. He chose Jacob (Israel), his servant, and Abraham, his friend and promised: "So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (41:8-13). The LORD is the Thresher. He will make the worm Jacob (little Israel) into a threshing sledge. With many new and sharp teeth. He will thresh the mountains, crush them and reduce them to chaff (41:15-16). The LORD is the Creator of the new creation. For the poor and needy he produces water. He will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valley. He will turn the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into springs. He will plant the cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, pine and fir (41:17-20). The LORD is the Foreteller of good tidings. He challenges other religions to present their case and set forth their arguments; to bring their idols to tell what is going to happen, to reveal the former things and to predict the future things, to do something, whether good or bad. Idols are less than nothing, wind and confusion. The LORD was the first to tell the coming of Cyrus (559-530 B.C.), who will tread on rulers as if they were mortar (41:21-29).

Chapter 42. The Servant of the LORD is the Saviour of the new community.

He is the LORD's chosen One, his delight, he will put his Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice. He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope. The LORD will make him a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness (42:1-7)⁴⁹.

The LORD gives his glory to no other (42:8).

He says the former things (which he predicted) have taken place and he announces new things before they spring up (42:9). He will lead the blind by ways they have not known, guide them along unfamiliar paths and turn darkness into light before them (42:16).

Israel is deaf and blind.

They have seen many things but have paid no attention (42:18,20). They did not follow the LORD's ways, did not obey his law. So he handed them over to be plundered, poured out on them his burning anger and the violence of war (42:24-25).

Chapter 43. The LORD saves the new community to be his witnesses.

He created, redeemed and summoned Israel by name. They are his (43:1). When they pass through the waters (the godless and wicked nations of the world) he will be with them. When they walk through the fire (persecution), they will not be burned (43:2). Since they are precious and honoured in his sight and he loves them, he will give men in exchange for their life (43:4). He will bring his children (the chosen believing remnant) from the four wind directions/the ends of the earth (to be his new community), everyone called by God's name and whom he created for his glory (42:5-7). The nations cannot foretell the former things and cannot produce witnesses that are right. The new community is the LORD's witnesses and servant. They know, understand and believe that before the LORD no god was formed, nor will there be a god after the LORD. There is no Saviour apart from the LORD. No one can save out his hand and no one can reverse his acts (43:9-13).

The LORD is faithful, but Israel is unfaithful.

The LORD is the Redeemer, who sends Cyrus to Babylon for the sake of his people. He is Israel's Creator, who made a way through the sea (43:14-17). *Typology in the Bible: the creation = a type of the exodus, the exodus = a type of the exile, the exile = a type of salvation under the new covenant.*

The LORD says: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing: Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert (43:18-19)." You have not called upon me. You have not wearied

⁴⁷ Cf. John 10 The Good Shepherd

⁴⁸ Cf. John 1:3

⁴⁹ Isaiah 35:6; 61:1; Matthew 11:6

yourselves for me. I have not burdened you (with bringing offerings), not wearied you with demands for incense. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more⁵⁰. Because your first father sinned⁵¹, your spokesmen (prophets and priests) rebelled against me, I disgraced the dignitaries of your temple and consigned Israel to destruction (43:22-28).

Chapter 44. The LORD is the only God and reveals and executes history.

The LORD chose Israel (Jeshurun= right/upright in God's judgement) to be his servant. He pours his Spirit out on Israel's offspring and they will take the name of Israel (44:1-5)⁵². The LORD is the First and the Last⁵³; apart from him there is no God⁵⁴. No one is like him. No one declares what has happened (in the past) or what is to come (in the future). The LORD foretold it long ago that there is no God besides him. The blacksmith makes tools and the carpenter makes idols that dwell in shrines. They fashion gods whom they worship, bow down to wood otherwise used as fuel to cook or to warm oneself. The LORD has not forgotten his servant Israel (the chosen and believing remnant). He swept their offenses away like the morning mist. He exhorts: "Return to me, for I redeem you". He displays his glory in Israel (44:6-23).

The LORD predicts the return from exile and rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The LORD foils the signs of false prophets and makes diviners fools and turns their predictions into nonsense. But he carries the words of his servants and fulfils the predictions of his messengers. He says: "Cyrus is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please." Judah, Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt (after the return from exile in 537 B.C.)(44:24-28)⁵⁵.

Chapter 45. The LORD is the only God and only Saviour of his people.

The LORD will break down gates and open doors for Cyrus. He is the LORD's anointed to subdue nations, whom the LORD summons by name for the sake of Israel, the LORD's chosen. There is no other than the LORD. Apart from him there is no God. He forms light and creates darkness. He brings prosperity and creates disaster (45:1-8). Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker. The clay does not say to the potter, "What are you making?" The LORD is the Creator and Maker. He raises up Cyrus to set the LORD's exiles free and to rebuilt the LORD's city. Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation (45:9-17). The LORD did not create the earth to be empty (Hebrew: tohu)(45:18). He did not speak in secret, he declares the truth and what is right. He says: "Turn to me and be saved, all ends of the earth. My mouth uttered a word that will not be revoked: 'Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear; in the LORD the descendants of Israel will be found righteous (45:19-25).

Chapter 46. The LORD is the only God and he only executes his plan.

"To whom will you compare me or count my equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared" (46:5)? While the idols of Babylon are borne by beasts of burden, the LORD carries his people since their birth. Idols are made by human hands/minds, lifted and carried on human shoulders, set up in shrines from where they cannot move; they do not answer prayers and cannot save. There is no other God than the LORD and there is none like him (46:9)⁵⁶. He makes known the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what is still to come. His purpose will stand and he will do all that he pleases (46:10). What he said, he will bring about, what he planned, he will do (46:11). His righteousness is near and his salvation will not be delayed (it will arrive with the Messiah/the first coming of Christ).

Chapter 47. The LORD foretells the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.).

Babylon, the queen of kingdoms, must sit down in dust. The cuddled and luxurious one must grind flower with the millstone. The LORD was angry with his people and gave them into the hand of Babylon. But Babylon showed no mercy and laid a heavy yoke on even the old. She did not reflect on what might happen, lounging in her security. In one day disaster will overtake her. Her sorceries and potent/magic spells will not conjure it away. Her astrologers and stargazers with their predictions cannot save her from what is coming upon her. Fire will consume her like stubble. The idols cannot even save themselves from the flames.

Chapter 48. The LORD knows what is best for you.

Israel, the citizens of the holy city, invoked the LORD, but not in truth or righteousness (48:1-2). The LORD foretold the former things long ago, announced them before they happened, so that people cannot say, 'My idols did them' (48:5). From now on the LORD will tell of new things, of hidden things unknown to Israel. They are created now and not long ago. Israel has not heard of them before today. So Israel cannot say, "I knew of them." (48:6-7)⁵⁷. Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD's chosen ally (Cyrus) will carry out his purpose against Babylon and he will succeed in his mission (48:14-15).

The LORD says, "I am the LORD your God who teaches you what is best for you; who directs you in the way you should go. If only you have paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand; your children like its numberless grains. Their name

⁵⁰ Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:12

⁵¹ Romans 5:12

⁵² Galatians 16:6; James 1:1

⁵³ Revelation 22:13

⁵⁴ John 8:24

⁵⁵ Ezra 1:1-4

⁵⁶ *The gods of the other religions do not really exist. They only exist in the minds of people or as demons (evil spirits).*

⁵⁷ For example, the mystery revealed to the New Testament apostles (Ephesians 3:2-6).

would never be cut off (48:17-19). *Typology in the Bible: the redemption from exodus = a type of the redemption from exile* (48:20-22).

Chapter 49. The Servant of the LORD is the Representative, Saviour and Covenant.

The LORD called the Messiah/the Servant of the LORD, he existed before he was born/before God became man (40:1). He is called 'Israel', the community in whom he will display his splendour. *Jesus Christ is everything God wanted Israel to be and the fulfilment of Israel* (49:3). He (the Servant of the LORD=Jesus) will bring back those of Israel (the chosen believing remnant of Israel) he has kept and he will also make the Servant of the LORD a Light for the (chosen believing remnant of the) Gentiles. Thus he will bring salvation to the ends of the earth (49:6). He was despised and yet kings will rise up and bow down before him (49:7) He is the fulfilment of the LORD's covenant to set the captives free and save the lost (49:8-9). He who has compassion on them will lead them beside springs of water (49:10).

(2) Chapters 49:14 - 55:13. Prophecies about the restoration of Jerusalem, called Zion, and its subsequent glory. There are more prophecies concerning the Servant of the LORD.

Chapter 49. The LORD does not forget his people (Israel). Gentiles bring them back to the land.

Though a mother may forget her baby, the LORD will never forget his people (Israel). He engraved (their names) on the palms of his hands (49:15-16). Though the land was made desolate (during the exile to Babylon), (at the return from exile in 537 B.C.) it will be too small (49:19). He will use the Gentiles to bring God's people on their shoulders back to the land and bow before you⁵⁸ (49:22).

Chapter 50. Israel is sold into sin and exile, but the Servant of the LORD is obedient.

Because of Israel's sin she was sent away into exile. When the LORD came to save, no one responded. The LORD's arm was not too short to ransom his people (50:1-2). The LORD gave his Servant an instructed tongue, that knows the word that sustains the weary, because every morning he listens like one being taught. He did not oppose the instruction, nor drew back in fear. He offered his back to those who beat him, his cheeks to those who pull out his beard, his face to those who spat on him⁵⁹. He was determined and made his face like flint (50:4-7).

Chapter 51. The new community must look to the LORD, the rock from which they were cut.

They must also look to Abraham and Sarah, their spiritual parents. When the LORD called Abraham, he was but one person. With God's blessing he became many (51:1-2). They must listen, because since the first coming of Christ the law (the gospel) went out from the LORD and his justice became a light to the nations. The LORD's righteousness and salvation is on the way and his arm will bring justice to the nations and the islands will wait in hope for this to happen (51:4-5). They must also look to the heavens, because at the second coming these will vanish like smoke and wear out like a garment. His righteousness and salvation will last forever (51:6-8).

Typology: the creation (verse 9) = a type for the exodus (verse 10) and the exodus = a type for the exile (verse 11). Rahab is a picture of the forces of chaos, a monster⁶⁰.

The old community had to drink the cup of God's wrath.

Jerusalem had to drink the cup of the wrath of God to its dregs. The LORD will take it out of their hand and give it into the hands of their tormentors, who said to God's people: "Fall prostrate that we may walk over you" and you made your back like a street to be walked over (51:17-23).

Chapter 52. The LORD proclaims the gospel about salvation and the reign of God.

Jerusalem, the holy city, must awake and clothe herself with garments of splendour. She was sold for nothing and without money she will be redeemed. Therefore she must free herself from the chains (first of Egypt, now of Assyria) on her neck. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, proclaim peace and salvation, saying: "Your God reigns". *All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.* Depart, go out from there (Babylon). Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure. The LORD will go before you and the God of Israel will be your rear guard (52:1-12).

Chapter 52:13 – 53:12. The Servant of the LORD will be exalted through suffering.

- **Stanza 1 (52:13-15). Jesus Christ would be exalted (elevated) only through suffering.**

Verse 13 describes his exaltation, that is, his resurrection, ascension and enthronement to the right hand of God⁶¹. His struggle will be crowned with victory, his labour will see results.

Verse 14 describes his humiliation, that is, the maltreatment by people who made him almost unrecognisable⁶².

Verse 15 describes his glorification. It compares his humiliation in verse 14 with his future glorious exaltation above everyone. Nations and kings will jump up in utter bewilderment and silently marvel at beholding his impressive appearance⁶³.

⁵⁸ cf. Revelation 3:9

⁵⁹ Matthew 26:67

⁶⁰ Job 41:1

⁶¹ Acts 3:13; Philippians 2:9-11

⁶² Mark 14:65; Mark 15:15,17,19; John 19:1-5

⁶³ cf. Isaiah 49:7; cf. Job 29:9-10; Psalm 22:29

Fulfilment. ‘The many’ who were appalled at his suffering are surpassed by ‘the many’ who came to know him after his glorification – They are an uncountable number of people from every nation including their high ranking kings.

• Stanza 2 (53:1-3). Jesus Christ would be despised and rejected by men.

Verse 1. In the religious area he would be treated with unbelief.

Verse 2. In the social area he would be despised.

Verse 3. In the physical area he would be abused/maltreated.

Fulfilment. The ancestors of Jesus according to his human nature were no great saints. Jesus was raised in Nazareth in the despised province of Galilee (where Gentiles lived)⁶⁴. His own hometown took offence at him⁶⁵. His own brothers did not believe in him⁶⁶. He lived in a time that Israel as God’s people was dry and dead⁶⁷ and the house of David had not ruled for a very long time. No one felt naturally attracted to him⁶⁸. The Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin spat in his face and struck him with fists⁶⁹. The Roman soldiers took his clothes off, spat on him, pressed a crown of thorns on his head and struck him on his head again and again with a staff⁷⁰. He was so marred that people could not look on his disfigured face!

• Stanza 3 (53:4-6). Jesus Christ would be crucified for our sins.

Verse 4. He will carry our sicknesses and sorrows – a summary of all human suffering, which was the consequence of the fall into sin.

Verse 5. He will be crucified for our sins. He would be punished in our place⁷¹. The punishment is a retaliation⁷². The punishment that brings peace (complete wholeness) and the lashes that bring healing are the secret of suffering as a substitution! What no man expected, became God’s pleasant surprise!

Verse 6. He will be punished for our wilful independence. The sin of man is deliberate, stubborn and obstinate independence from God. That is why the sin of man is guilty and punishable.

Fulfilment. Jesus Christ delivered many people possessed by evil spirits and healed many sick people as the fulfilment of this prophecy⁷³. Although Jesus Christ took the suffering of people on himself, people thought that he was plagued by God due to his own sins! *He not only died for us, but in our place!* “He bore our sins in his body on the tree”⁷⁴.

He was “made sin”, so that whoever believed in him, would be “made the righteousness of God”⁷⁵. He thus exchanged places with us!

• Stanza 4 (53:7-9). Jesus Christ would submit to his suffering.

Verse 7 describes his suffering as a lamb.

Verse 8 describes his death as a criminal. He would not die in a peaceful way (in old age), but as a convicted criminal, sentenced by an unrighteous religion (the Jewish Sanhedrin together with Annas and Caiaphas) and a worldly court (the Roman procurator, Pilate). In the Old Testament period until the time the disciples of Jesus mourned the death of Jesus, there was but little knowledge about life after death.

Verse 9 describes his burial as a rich man. God accorded him honour instead of the dishonour his enemies had planned.

Fulfilment. During his life Jesus Christ was called names as being a deceiver, a demon-possessed and mad⁷⁶. Yet he did not return abuse⁷⁷. His honourable burial was the first sign the LORD regarded his Servant, Jesus Christ, to be blameless!

• Stanza 5 (53:10-12). Jesus Christ will receive a glorious inheritance.

Verse 10 describes his suffering as a substitution and his resurrection as part of God’s plan. Jesus Christ had to die⁷⁸, because this was the only way in which atonement for sins could be made and because the revelation in the Scriptures about this had to be fulfilled! But on the level of Gods history of salvation he died due to the perfectly just condemnation of the sin of the world by the Judge, God himself!

⁶⁴ Mark 1:9; cf. John 1:46

⁶⁵ Mark 6:3

⁶⁶ John 7:5

⁶⁷ Matthew 21:43

⁶⁸ Isaiah 53:1-3

⁶⁹ Matthew 26:67

⁷⁰ Matthew 27:27-30

⁷¹ cf. Romans 3:25

⁷² Jeremiah 2:19

⁷³ Matthew 8:16-17

⁷⁴ 1 Peter 2:24

⁷⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁷⁶ John 7:12,20; John 8:48; John 10:19-20

⁷⁷ 1 Peter 2:23

⁷⁸ Luke 24:26; Matthew 26:54

His sacrifice of atonement had three results: First, he (the Messiah) would see seed/offspring, that is, “spiritual offspring”, “the many people he would justify” (53:11) and bless⁷⁹. Second, “He would lengthen his days”, that is, he would live forever after his resurrection from the dead⁸⁰! This is remarkable, because very little is written in the Old Testament about the resurrection of the dead⁸¹. Third, the Messiah would have a great task after his death and resurrection. Through his death and resurrection Jesus Christ would multiply his spiritual offspring/descendants destined for eternal life⁸².

Verse 11 describes his work as God’s High Priest justifying the many after his resurrection.

By means of his spiritual ‘knowledge’ of God and God’s revelation (plan of salvation)⁸³ the Messiah would justify many people. The righteousness of the Messiah would be the ground why he would justify ‘the many’, that is, the great mass or number of people, God’s people⁸⁴! ‘The many’ is to be understood as a comparison: in contrast to the One (the Messiah) there is the many (a great crowd which no one can count)⁸⁵.

Verse 12 describes his reward from God for his substitution suffering, namely: ‘the many’ people he would justify.

Fulfilment. Through his death and resurrection Jesus Christ began to multiply his spiritual offspring⁸⁶.

According to his divine nature Jesus lives forever and never dies: “I am the living One forever”⁸⁷. According to his human nature he died and was resurrected. After his resurrection from the dead, his human nature now also lives forever.

Isaiah 53 is most clearly quoted in the New Testament in Acts 8:28-35 and 1 Peter 2:22-25. But also compare Matthew 20:28 with Isaiah 53:10 and John 1:29 with Isaiah 53:4,7. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, had to enter into his glory through suffering⁸⁸. Although in Isaiah 49:3 ‘the Servant of the LORD’ is pictured as ‘the true Israel’ (as if the prophet is speaking about the suffering of the nation of Israel), it cannot literally refer to the nation of Israel. The Servant of the LORD is constantly contrasted with the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel is godless. It despised and rejected the Messiah, even though he is perfectly innocent! The figure of the Servant of the LORD surpasses everything that was ever witnessed within Israel! He is the One who would save Israel from sin and guilt, the Mediator of God’s plan of salvation!

Chapter 54. After the first coming of the Messiah (ch. 53), the new community will spread out to the nations (ch. 54).

The children of the barren/desolate woman (the new community during the Old Testament period is still a small remnant of believers) will be more than her who has a husband (54:1). She must enlarge the place of her tent and lengthen her cords, because she will spread out to the right and to the left and her descendants will dispossess the nations (54:2-3). The LORD, her Maker, is figuratively her husband who deserted/rejected/abandoned her (to exile) in anger, but will again have everlasting compassion on her (54:5-8). His unfailing love (for the remnant of his people) will not be shaken, his covenant of peace (with them) will not be removed (54:10).

The LORD will teach all her sons; they will be established in righteousness (they will be justified by faith in Jesus Christ)(54:13-14). The LORD created the destroyer (Assyrians) who worked havoc, but no weapon forged by the blacksmith against the remnant will prevail (54:16-17).

Chapter 55. The new community will summon the nations.

The thirsty people in the nations are invited to come to the LORD and buy the essential things without money (the Gospel is free)(55:1-2). The LORD made David (a type of the Messiah) a witness, a commander summoning the nations. The Old Testament remnant (for example, the apostles) will summon nations they do not know (New Testament nations, Jews and Gentiles). These nations will hasten to join the new community (55:3-5). The nations must seek the LORD while he may be found, call on him while he is near. They must forsake their (evil) ways and turn to the LORD. The LORD will certainly forgive (55:6-7). The LORD’s thoughts and ways are not like that of people. They are higher as the heaven is higher than the earth (55:8-9). The word of the LORD is like rain watering the earth. It will not return empty to him, but accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it (55:10-11).

(3) Chapters 56-66. Prophecies with a variety of themes.

Chapter 56. The new community is also for alien believers.

Aliens who have bound themselves to the LORD, who hold fast to his covenant and serve the LORD, will surely not be excluded from his people (56:3-6). The LORD will also bring them to his holy mountain (the new community) and the house of the LORD (the new community) will be a house of prayer for all nations (56:7). The LORD who will gather the exiles (from Babylon) will gather still others (Gentile believers) to them (56:8). (A prophecy about New Testament worldwide missions).

Chapter 57. The LORD is wearied by the idolatry of Israel.

He calls Israel (during the period of the kings between 11th and 6th centuries B.C.) ‘sons of a sorceress’, ‘the offspring of adulterers and prostitutes’. They are a brood of rebels, offspring of liars. They burn with lust (spiritual immorality with

⁷⁹ see Genesis 12:3

⁸⁰ see Revelation 1:18

⁸¹ cf. Isaiah 26:19

⁸² see John 12:32

⁸³ cf. Hosea 4:6; Malachi 2:7; Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 50:4, his prophetic office

⁸⁴ cf. Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:33; Daniel 12:3; Romans 5:19

⁸⁵ Revelation 7:9; Romans 5:19

⁸⁶ John 12:24,32

⁸⁷ Revelation 1:18

⁸⁸ Luke 18:31-33; Luke 24:25-27

idols) among the oaks and under every spreading tree. They sacrifice their children and other sacrifices in the ravines to their idols. They put their pagan symbols behind their closed door. They practise (spiritual and physical) prostitution with the heathen. They do not fear the LORD, because he has been silent for a long time. The LORD will expose the righteousness and works (of the idols)(ironically intended). When Israel cries out for help, let their collection of idols save them (57:1-13a)! The one who makes the LORD his refuge, will inherit the land and possess his holy mountain (will belong to the new community)(57:13b).

The LORD lives with contrite and lowly in spirit.

He lives in a high and holy place (heaven), but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit (through his Holy Spirit). He revives their spirit and heart. He will not accuse forever or always be angry, otherwise their spirit would grow faint. The LORD will heal, restore, comfort, guide (the lowly and contrite)(57:14-19). The wicked, however, are like the tossing of the sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace", says the LORD, "for the wicked" (57:20-21).

Chapter 58. The new community fasts/denies itself by way of doing justice and sharing.

Declare to Israel their rebellion and sins. They do business and drive on their workers. They call a 'fast' bowing their heads, lying on sackcloth and ashes (for the show), but at the same time they quarrel and fight (58:1-5). The kind of fasting the LORD finds acceptable is to stop injustice, set the oppressed free, share food with the hungry, provide shelter for the wanderer, clothe the naked (58:6-7). Then the LORD will answer prayer (58:9). Then the LORD will guide you always, satisfy you in a sun-scorched land and strengthen your frame. Then you will be like a well-watered garden, a spring whose waters never fail. Then your people will rebuild the ancient ruins, raise up age-old foundations. You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings (58:6-12). Stop doing as you please. Stop going your own way. Stop speaking idle words (58:13-14).

Chapter 59. The LORD is displeased with the injustice of his people.

The arm of the LORD is not too short to save nor his ear to dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you. So that he will not hear. No one (in Israel) calls for justice. No one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies (59:1-4). So justice is far from them. They look for light but all is darkness. They grope along the wall like the blind and feel their way like men without eyes (59:9-10). The LORD was displeased that there was no justice (in the land). He was appalled that there was no one to intervene (59:15-16). He will repay according to what people have done (59:18).

The covenant of the LORD: The Spirit that is on the new community and the words he puts in the mouth of his servants will not depart from their mouths and from the mouths of their descendants forever (59:21).

Chapter 60. The ideal of the new community in the present and the reality of the new community on the new earth.

The return from exile is a figurative type of salvation of the new community. The light and glory of the LORD rises on the new community⁸⁹. The nations on earth (both Gentiles and Jews) will come to the light of the new community⁹⁰. The sons and daughters of the new community will come from afar, being carried on the arms of others. The wealth of the nations will be brought into the new community. *The rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile is a figurative type of the rebuilding of the new community* (60:1-5)⁹¹. *Aliens (who have become part of the chosen remnant) will rebuild her walls*⁹². Her gates will always stand open, they will never be shut day or night⁹³. Men will bring the wealth of the nations into her⁹⁴. The sun will no more be her light⁹⁵, because the LORD will be her everlasting light and glory⁹⁶. The days of her sorrow will end⁹⁷. All her people will be righteous⁹⁸. They will possess the land (the new earth) forever⁹⁹. The least of her citizens will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation (the remnant will multiply to an uncountable number of chosen believers)(60:10-22).

Chapter 61. The ministry of the prophet is a figurative type of the ministry of the Messiah and of the ministry of the new community.

With the Holy Spirit on them, they will preach the good news to the poor, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives, proclaim the release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the LORD's favour (proclaim salvation and judgement, namely,) the day of vengeance of God (61:1-3).

The new community will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour. These aliens would rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the devastated cities. They would shepherd their flocks and work their

⁸⁹ Revelation 21:11

⁹⁰ Revelation 21:24

⁹¹ Revelation 21:11,24,26

⁹² Revelation 21:12-14

⁹³ Revelation 21:25

⁹⁴ Revelation 21:24,26

⁹⁵ Revelation 21:23

⁹⁶ Revelation 22:5

⁹⁷ Revelation 7:17; 21:4

⁹⁸ Isaiah 1:27

⁹⁹ Matthew 5:5; Romans 4:13

fields and vineyards (61:3-6). As the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes the seeds to grow, so the LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations (61:11).

The Old Testament notion was that foreigners would serve the Jews, rebuild their land and cities and take care of their flocks and fields, while the Jews would be the priests and ministers of the LORD. Israel would be the centre of the world (2:2-4) and foreign nations could only become part of the people of God by joining the Jews. However, the New Testament reveals the opposite of this notion: The Old Testament believers will only be made perfect together with the New Testament believers¹⁰⁰! The New Testament believers will make Israel envious¹⁰¹. Unbelieving Jews will be cut off from the olive tree (God's people) to make place for believing Gentiles¹⁰².

Chapter 62. The ministry of the watchmen is figurative of the ministry of the proclaimers until the new community is completely established.

The prophet Isaiah will not keep silent for the sake of the new community until proclamation (of the gospel) has been made to the ends of the earth and the Saviour has come (62:11-12). The prophet posted watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem (the new community) and they will never be silent day or night. These watchmen who remind/call on the LORD must give him no rest until he has established the new community and has made it the praise of the earth (62:6-7)¹⁰³. *The Gentile nations will see the righteousness and glory of the new community (the believers in Israel and in the Gentile nations) and the new community will be called by a new name.* The nations used to call the old community (the natural nation of Israel) 'Deserted and Desolate', but she (the new community) will be called 'the LORD's delight is in her' (Hephzibah) and 'the LORD rejoices in his married bride' (Beulah)¹⁰⁴ (62:2-5). The new community will be called 'the Holy People', 'the Redeemed of the LORD', 'Sought After' and 'the City No Longer Deserted' (62:12). The Holy City, Jerusalem, will be called '*the New Jerusalem*'¹⁰⁵.

Chapter 63. Israel has become like the Gentile nations and recalls the days of old.

The day of vengeance and the year of redemption has arrived. Therefore the LORD comes with garments spattered with blood. The LORD trampled the (unbelieving) nations in his anger (63:1-6)¹⁰⁶. The deeds of the LORD in the past: he became the Saviour of his people and in their distress he too was distressed. The Angel of his presence saved them, in his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved his Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them (for example before the exodus and during the exile). Then his people recalled these days of old. They recalled the exodus, confessed the LORD as their Father, even though Abraham does not know them (the present people of God) and Jacob does not acknowledge them. And they ask the LORD why their hearts have become hardened like that of the other nations (63:17). *For a little while Israel possessed Jerusalem (They were the people of God), but now their enemies have trampled down the sanctuary and Israel has become like the other nations* (63:18).

Chapter 64. Israel recalls God as Father, but Jerusalem and the sanctuary has been destroyed.

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides the LORD who acts on behalf of those who wait for him and those who do right and remember the LORD's ways (the LORD acts on behalf of the faithful remnant)(64:4-5). But now the LORD is angry and the natural nation of Israel is sinful and godless. Therefore like the wind their sins sweep them away and God hides his face from them (64:5-7). Their sacred cities have become a desert and the holy temple has been burned with fire (586 B.C.)(64:8-12).

Chapter 65. Judgement for the nation and salvation for the remnant.

The LORD revealed himself to those who did not ask for him. He was found by those who did not seek him. He said, "Here am I" to a nation that did not call on his name. The election of Israel was completely by love and grace, completely undeserved. But all day long the LORD held out his hands to an obstinate people. They walked in evil ways, and pursued their own imaginations. They continually provoked the LORD to his face by their gross idolatry (sacrifices in gardens, incense altars, keeping secret vigils among the graves, eating flesh of pigs). The LORD will make them pay the full payment for their sins and the sins of their fathers (65:1-7). They forsook the LORD and forgot his temple. They spread a table for Fortune and drank wine for Destiny. The LORD called but they did not answer, spoke but they did not listen. The LORD will destine them for the sword (65:11-12).

Salvation is however for the remnant. The LORD will not destroy them. His chosen remnant will inherit the mountains of Judah (65:8-10). While the sinful nation will leave the name 'Israel' to the LORD's chosen ones as a curse (65:15) he will give his servants (the remnant) a new name (62:2).

The new creation is figurative of the new community.

¹⁰⁰ Hebrews 11:39-40

¹⁰¹ Romans 11:11

¹⁰² Romans 11:16-24

¹⁰³ Luke 18:1-8; 2 Timothy 4:2. "Your Kingdom come."

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah 54:1;5-8

¹⁰⁵ Revelation 2:17; 3:12; 21:2,9-11 'The New Jerusalem'.

¹⁰⁶ Revelation 19:11-16, especially verse 13, "He (Christ) is dressed in a robe dipped in blood"

The LORD will create a new heavens and a new earth (65:1)¹⁰⁷. The former things will not be remembered. He will create (the new) Jerusalem¹⁰⁸ to be a delight and its people a joy. The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more¹⁰⁹. The chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands¹¹⁰. Before they call I will answer, while they are still speaking I will hear (65:24). The wolf and the lamb will feed together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain (65:25).

Chapter 66. The new community will proclaim the glory of the LORD and endure forever.

The LORD's fury will be shown to his foes and he will execute judgement upon all men (66:14-16). The LORD will send some of those who survive to the nations who have not heard his fame or seen his glory. They will proclaim the glory of the LORD among the nations (66:19). The LORD will bring their brothers from all the nations to the new community (66:20). The LORD will select some of them also to be priests and Levites (66:21). The new heavens and the new earth and the new community will endure before the LORD (66:22).

¹⁰⁷ Revelation 21:1,5

¹⁰⁸ Hebrews 12:22-24

¹⁰⁹ Revelation 21:4

¹¹⁰ Revelation 14:13