

Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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Introduction to the Book of Isaiah

When Was the Book of Isaiah Written?

- The book of Isaiah tells us that Isaiah prophesied “*in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*” (1:1).
- His call to ministry came “*in the year that King Uzziah died*” (6:1), around 740 B.C.
- Most of the events referred to in chapters 1-39 occurred during Isaiah’s ministry (6:1; 14:28; 36:1), so these chapters may have been completed not long after 701 BC, the year the Assyrian army was destroyed.
- The prophet lived until at least 681 BC and may have written chapters 40-66 during his later years.

Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?

- Isaiah, son of Amoz, is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets.
- His name means “The LORD is salvation.” He was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah, beginning his ministry in 740 BC, the year King Uzziah died (Isa 6: 1).
- Isaiah was married and had at least two sons, Shear-Jashub (Isa 7: 3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Isa 8: 3).
- He probably spent most of his life in *Jerusalem*, enjoying his *greatest* influence under *King Hezekiah* (Isa 37:1-2).
- Isaiah is *also* credited with writing a *history* of the reign of King Uzziah (2Ch 26: 22).
- Exactly *when* Isaiah was put to death is not known. According to an unsubstantiated Jewish tradition (*The Ascension of Isaiah*), he was sawed in half during the reign of Manasseh (cf. Heb 11: 37).

Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?

- Some (liberal) scholars theorize that more than one author was responsible for writing the book of Isaiah.
- According to *them* what we have in the book of Isaiah is really *three* books:
 - *First* Isaiah (Isa 1-39), which is largely the work of Isaiah
 - *Second* Isaiah (Isa 40-55), is the work of an anonymous prophet living during the Babylonian exile, over a century *after* Isaiah.
 - *Third* Isaiah (Isa 56-66), was composed by *yet another* anonymous prophet sometime in the fifth century BC.

Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?

- The primary reasons offered for not attributing chapters 40-66 to Isaiah the son of Amoz are:
 - The writing in chapters 40-66 seems to differ (at times) in style from the writing in chapters 1-39.
 - There are *prophecies* in chapters 40-66 which *accurately* describe things that happened over 100 years after Isaiah died, therefore they assume those things *couldn't* have been written by Isaiah!

Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?

- But this claim that there were *multiple* authors of the book of Isaiah just *doesn't* stand up to serious scrutiny.
- There is *unified* testimony from the ancient world for *single* authorship for the book of Isaiah.
- The intertestamental book of Sirach (48:24-25) and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 11.5-6) *both* attest to Isaiah's authorship of the whole book.
- The *NT* refers to passages *throughout* the book as the work of Isaiah and *never* suggests that there are any other authors (see Matt 3:3; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:14-15; 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-7; Luke 3:4-6; 4:17-19; John 1:23; 12:37-41; Acts 8:27-35; 28:25-27; Rom 9:27-29; 10:16, 20-21; 15:12).

Who Wrote the Book of Isaiah?

- Any “differences of style” within the book can be explained by the *different topics* covered and by the fact that the various parts of the book were probably written at different stages in Isaiah’s life.
- The accurate prophecies given in chapters 40-66 are not only *not* a problem, they are *evidence* of the Lord’s sovereign control over history.
- In fact, there is within these very chapters an *appeal* to the fact that the Lord can *accurately* predict the future, while the pagan gods and idols *cannot*:
 - *“Present the case for your idols,” says the LORD. “Let them show what they can do,” says the King of Israel. “Let them ... tell us what the future holds, so we can know what's going to happen. Yes, tell us what will occur in the days ahead. Then we will know you are gods.* (Isaiah 41:21-23a NLT)

Historical Background to the Book of Isaiah

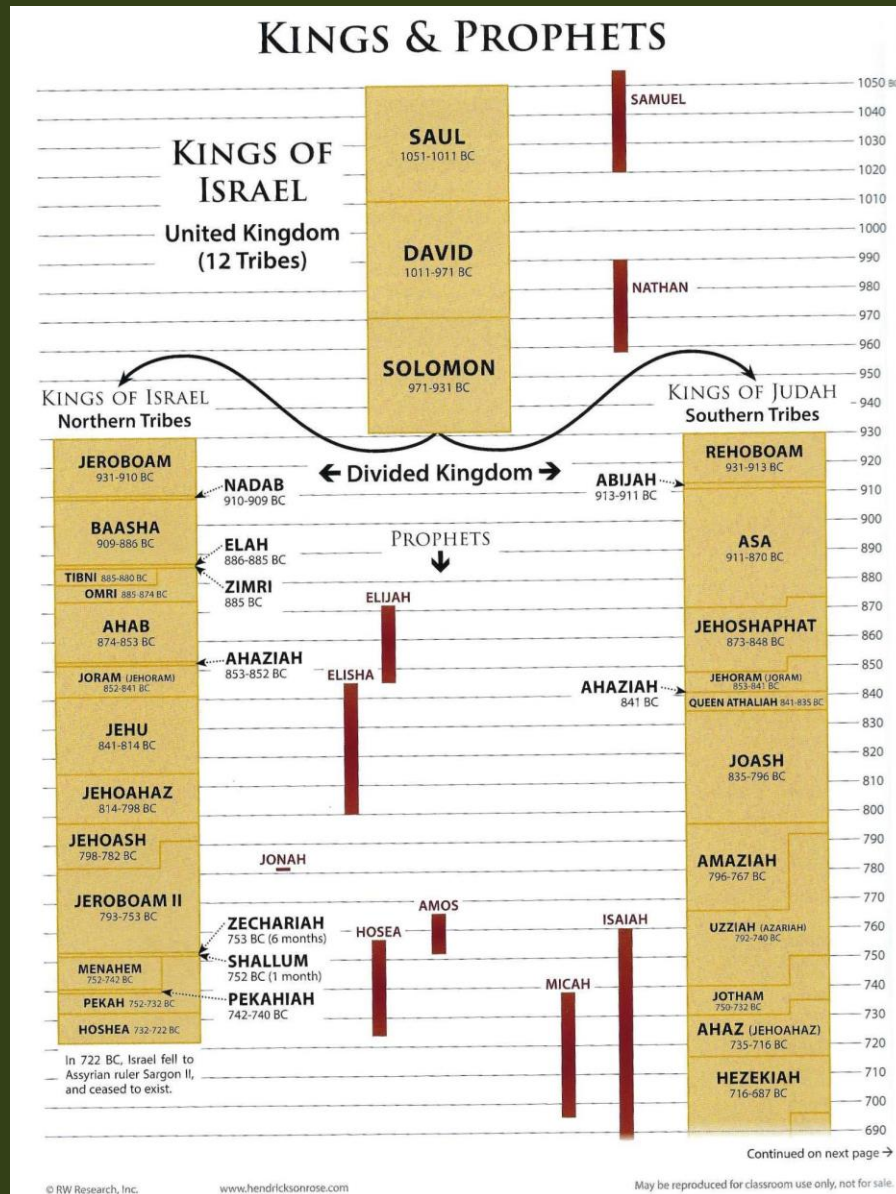
Brief History of Israel *Prior to Isaiah*

- The Israelites were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who, after a period of serving as slaves in Egypt were rescued by God (through Moses) and given the land of Canaan.
- Eventually, Israel, wanting to “*be like other nations*” (1 Sam 8:5), asked God for a *king*.
- The first three kings of Israel were:
 - Saul
 - David
 - Solomon
- During the reign of Solomon’s *son, Rehoboam*, the people revolted against the heavy taxes levied by Solomon and Rehoboam and became a *divided kingdom*.

Brief History of Israel *Prior to Isaiah*

- The tribe of Judah and the majority of the tribe of Benjamin accepted *Rehoboam* as their king.
- They became the kingdom of *Judah*, or the *Southern Kingdom*, with its capital at Jerusalem.
- The other 10 tribes and the remainder of the tribe of Benjamin chose *Jeroboam* as their king.
- These ten tribes retained the title of *Israel*, and became the *Northern Kingdom*, with headquarters at Shechem in Samaria.
- About 200 years after this division, *Isaiah* became one of the prophets God sent to minister to the Southern Kingdom.

Kings and Prophets



The Divided Kingdom



Historical Background of *Isaiah*

- Isaiah lived during the stormy period of the *expansion* of the *Assyrian Empire* and the *decline* of *Israel*.
- Under the Assyrian King *Tiglath-Pileser III* (745-727 BC) the Assyrians swept westward into Aram (Syria) and Canaan.
- In about 733 BC the kings of *Aram* and *Israel* tried to pressure *Ahaz*, king of Judah, into joining a coalition against Assyria.
- Ahaz chose *instead* to ask the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser for help, a decision *condemned* by Isaiah.
- Assyria did *assist* Judah and *conquered* the northern kingdom in 722 BC.

Near East at the Time Isaiah *Began* His Ministry (740 BC)



The Middle East Today



Assyrian Empire



Historical Background of *Isaiah*

- Assyria's conquest of the northern kingdom made Judah even *more* vulnerable, and in 701 BC *King Sennacherib* of Assyria threatened Jerusalem *itself*.
- The godly *King Hezekiah* prayed earnestly, and Isaiah predicted that God would force the Assyrians to withdraw from the city – which he did.
- Nevertheless, Isaiah warned Judah that their sin would *eventually* bring captivity at the hands of *Babylonia*.
- The visit of the Babylonian king's envoys to Hezekiah set the stage for this prediction.
- In 586 BC, Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonian Empire and carried into exile.

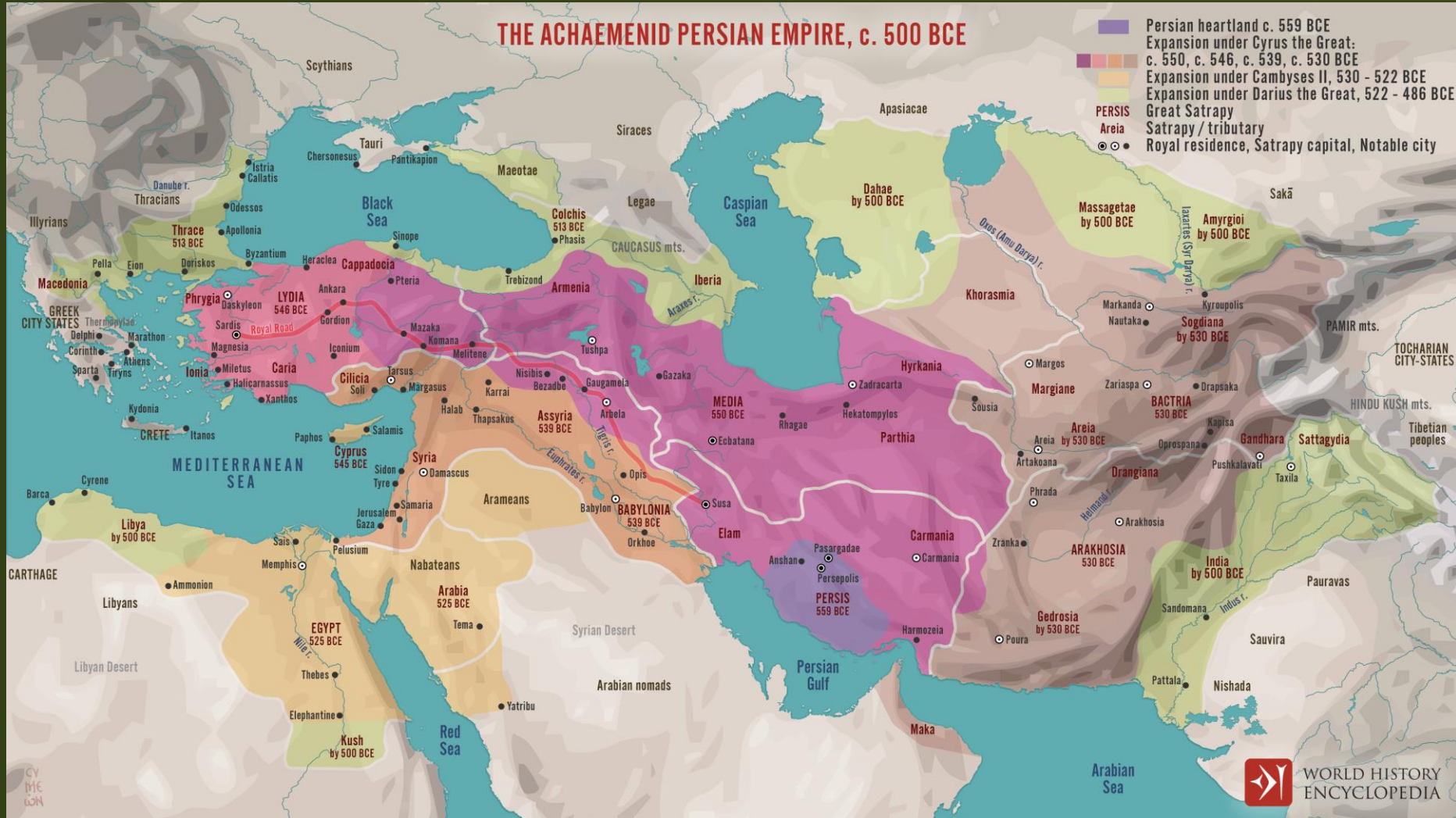
Babylonia Empire



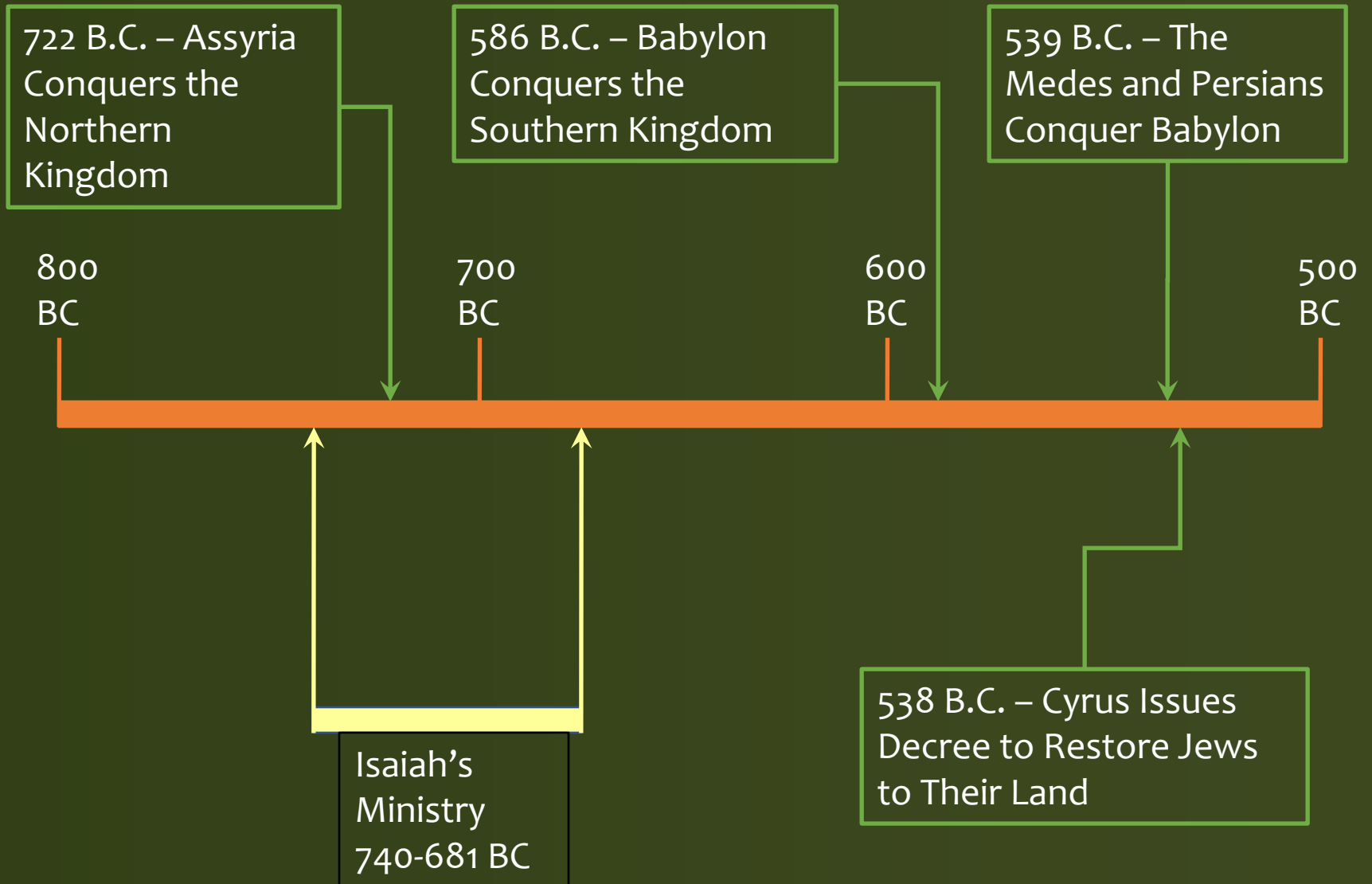
Historical Background of *Isaiah*

- The fall of Jerusalem took place nearly a hundred years *after* the *death* of Isaiah, but as a prophet of God he not only *knew* of the future *destruction* of Judah, but he went on to predict the *restoration* of the Jewish people from captivity.
- God would redeem his people from *Babylonia*, just as he had rescued them from *Egypt*.
- Isaiah predicted (by name!) the rise of *Cyrus* the *Persian*, who would unite the Medes and Persians and conquer Babylon in 539 BC.
- The decree of Cyrus would allow the Jews to return home in 538 BC, a deliverance that prefigured the *greater* salvation from sin through Christ.

Persian Empire



Isaiah Timeline



A Quick High Level Summary of the Book of Isaiah

JUDGMENT! ISRAEL'S REBELLION WILL COME AT A COST (BABYLON, ASSYRIA)

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE: HOPE!

THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES
 A FUTURE KING FROM THE LINE OF DAVID (AS MESSIAH)
 ISRAEL'S OBEEDIENCE TO THE COVENANT (EXODUS 19)
 GOD'S BLESSING TO THE NATIONS (GENESIS 12)

ISAJAH

Suffering Servant-King Covenant Family of All Nations Hope for a Renewed Creation

* WHOSE VOICE ARE WE HEARING IN CHAPTERS 40-66? (THE PERSPECTIVE IS FROM AFTER 538 B.C. - SEE EZRA/NEHEMIAH)

A. THE VOICE OF ISAIAH TRANSPORTED INTO THE FUTURE (720's B.C. - 530's B.C.)

B. THE VOICE OF ISAIAH AND HIS PROPHETIC DISCIPLES (SEE EZEKIEL, 29:10-12, 30:8-9) (720's B.C. - 530's B.C.)

1-12 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR JERUSALEM

1-2 PURIFYING FIRE
 OLD JERUSALEM: REBELLION, IDOLATRY & INJUSTICE
 NEW JERUSALEM: JUSTICE & PEACE FOR ALL NATIONS

6 ISAIAH'S TEMPLE VISION
 NO, YOU'RE PURIFIED! NOW GO...
 ASSYRIA & BABYLON
 A HOLY SEED?

7-12 AHAZ
 7 IMMANUEL - GOD WITH US
 8 FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION
 9 EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT
 10 YOU'RE GOING DOWN! GOD WILL RAISE UP A NEW KING.
 11 A NEW BRANCH FROM THE STUMP OF DAVID'S FAMILY
 12 ALL NATIONS

13-27 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR THE NATIONS

13-23 FALL OF BABYLON & ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS
 I WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN AND MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH GOD!
 PHILISTIA, BABYLON, EGYPT, DAMASCUS, ASSYRIA

23-27 A TALE OF TWO CITIES
 THE LEFTY CITY: ARCHETYPE OF REBELLIOUS HUMANITY - DESCRIBED WITH IMAGES FROM CHAPTERS 9-23
 THE RIGHTY CITY: DESIGNED FOR RUIN!
 GOD'S KINGDOM OVER ALL NATIONS!
 NO MORE SUFFERING ON EARTH!

28-39 THE RISE & FALL OF JERUSALEM

28-35 ACCUSATION OF JERUSALEM'S LEADERS
 ALLIANCE WITH EGYPT
 NO! YOU'LL BE SAVED BY REPENTANCE & TRUST!
 DELIVER US FROM THE ASSYRIANS, O LORD!

30-39 HEZEKIAH'S RISE
 MIRACULOUSLY SAVED!
 HEZEKIAH'S FALL
 NO! BABYLON WILL BETRAY & DESTROY JERUSALEM!
 SHURE ENOUGH, 100-YEAR LATER
 BABYLON ATTACKS! (SEE 2 KINGS 24-25)

40-48 ANNOUNCEMENT OF HOPE

40 "COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE!"
 EXILE IS OVER!
 ISRAEL CAN RETURN HOME - GOD'S KINGDOM IS COMING

THE ACCUSATION
 GOD HAS HONORED US & OUR TROUBLE!
 (40:1-2)
 FINING THE LORD ARMY THE MOST POWERFUL GOD!

THE TRIAL
 GOD'S RESPONSE
 1) EXILE WAS JUSTIFIED, NOT REJECTED
 2) FOR ISRAEL'S SAKE, GOD RAISED UP PERSIAN TO CONQUER BABYLON (42:1-4)

THE RIGHT CONCLUSION
 ISRAEL'S GOD IS THE TRUE KING OF PEOPLES!
 GOD'S SERVANT TO THE NATIONS
 ISRAEL IS STILL REBELLIOUS
 GOD'S GOING TO DO A NEW THING!

49-55 THE SERVANT FULFILLS GOD'S MISSION

49 GOD'S SERVANT
 YOU ARE NOW ISRAEL.
 GOOD NEWS! GOD'S KINGDOM!
 THE MISSION:
 1) TO RESTORE ISRAEL
 2) TO BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

IS REJECTED & KILLED
 (50:4-9, 52:13-53:12)

BUT LIVES AGAIN (53:10-12)
 I DECLARE YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD!
 2 Ways to Respond:
 1) THE WICKED RESIST & REJECT THE SERVANT
 2) THE SERVANTS (A.K.A. "THE SEED") ARE HUMBLE & REPENT

56-66 THE SERVANTS INHERIT GOD'S KINGDOM

THE WICKED:
 FACE GOD'S JUSTICE - REMOVED FROM CITY

THE NEW JERUSALEM
 FORGIVE US O LORD!

THE SERVANTS INHERIT THE NEW CREATION

56-58 PRATER OF REPENTANCE
 59 SERVANT ANNOUNCES GOD'S KINGDOM
 60-62 PRATER OF REPENTANCE

56a CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WICKED & THE SERVANTS 65-66a
 60b ALL NATIONS INVITED TO JOIN GOD'S COVENANT FAMILY 66b