

Isaiah 56-66 Set in Time

1. Many biblical writers date their stories according to the chronology of rulers, Luke 1:5, 2:2, 3.
 - a. Saul 1050-1010, David 1010-970, and Solomon 970-930 ruled the United Monarchy.
 - b. In 930 the kingdom split with Israel in the north and Judah in the south.
 - c. From 930 to 722 Israel had 20 (—) kings, Judah had 13 (+/—) kings.
 - i. In 722 Assyria destroys Israel's capital, Samaria, and exiles the people.
2. Isaiah prophesies to Judah/Jerusalem, in the south, at that time.
 - a. Isaiah's prophecy overlaps that of Micah and Hosea.
3. Chapters 1-39 of the book of Isaiah describe events during the reigns of Judah's kings Ahaz, 731-715, a (—), and his son Hezekiah, 715-686, a (+).
 - a. Good as he was, Hezekiah acts dumb near the end of his reign, see I39 note.
 - b. As a result, God has Isaiah state that Judah will be destroyed and the people exiled by the Babylonians, who would conquer Assyria.
4. Many commentators read Isaiah 40-55 and 56-66 as future-oriented: chapters 40-55 comfort the coming exiles with God's promise to bring them home, while 56-66 warn the returned exiles that repeating their ancestors' sins would bring similar judgment.
5. We will focus on this final section of Isaiah (for many weeks).
6. Assuming the above division of Isaiah, many biblically recorded events occur during the 150-year time gap between Isaiah chapters 39 and 40.
 - a. Both other major prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, prophesied in this period:
 - i. Jeremiah speaks to a disobedient Judah in Jerusalem, warning that God would exile them if they do not repent. But Jeremiah also wrote about a return after 70 years.
 - ii. Ezekiel speaks from Babylon itself, having been taken away in an earlier, partial exile, see 3 Deportations note. Ezekiel writes about Jerusalem's destruction but also about a future return.
 - b. The Persians conquer the Babylonians, and their king, Cyrus, allows all exiles to return to their homelands. Many, but not all, Judahites do.
 - c. Immediately after returning, the Judahites build a new altar, so they can sacrifice, and, despite many delays, rebuild the temple, and eventually the walls and gates, see Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
7. I propose that Isaiah wrote the final two sections of his book, not to those living at the time his words describe, but to those in his time (1) to encourage their faithful behavior and (2) to warn of taking God's mercy for granted.