

Structure of the Book of Isaiah

- 1-12 Judgement of God and the redemption of Israel
- 13-17 God's righteousness is shown among the nations
- 28-35 Visions of a righteous king in Jerusalem
- 36-39 Jerusalem saved but the threat of Babylon remains real
- 40-55 Hope of a return to Jerusalem for those in exile in Babylon
- 56-66 The new heaven and the new earth

1-12 Judgement on Jerusalem and redemption

Chapter 1 This may have been composed as an introduction to the entire book

- vv1-5 Israel is unfaithful and a connection is made with the suffering in Jerusalem
- vv5-9 Probably refers to the Syro-Ephraimite invasion of 734-733BCE.
- vv10-20 Insincere worship is condemned – yet God is prepared to be reasonable
- vv 21-26 Judgement in the form of the Exile followed by restoration
- vv 27-31 The redeemed and the sinners in Zion

Chapter 2 The “word of Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem

- vv2-4 Come let us go the mountain of the Lord (Zion)
- vv5-22 The haughtiness of man shall be humbled before the judgement of God

Chapter 3

- vv1-12 The world is turned upside down as proper authority is removed – instability
- vv13-15 Judgement of God
- vv16-26 The haughty women of Jerusalem will be humiliated as prizes of war

Chapter 4

- vv1-6 Survivors will be restored to Jerusalem, which will be under God's protection

Chapter 5 The Song of the Vineyard and the judgement of the nation

- vv1-7 A song about a vineyard which predicts God's judgement on Zion
- vv8-23 A series of “Woes” against the people – specific complaints about them
- vv24-28 The anger of the Lord is kindled against the people.

Chapter 6

Isaiah's vision in the temple – the call and commissioning of the prophet 642BCE

Chapters 7-8

Isaiah's advice to the king

- vv1-9 Isaiah spells out the political situation to the king
- vv10-17 Immanuel sign and how God intends to protect the nation. "God with us"
- vv18-25 Immanuel (God with us) has a double meaning for salvation and judgement
Prophecies of an invasion by Assyria, where Ahaz turned for help.
- 8 vv 1-8 Again the symbol of a birth of a child is used Mahershalalhashbaz to describe the fall of Damascus and Samaria
- vv9-15 God's presence is a blessing but may also be an instrument of judgement
- vv16-25 Isaiah is to bind up the testimony. Meanwhile there is judgement on the nation.
- Chapter 9 v 1 Conclusion of the previous chapter? – dismantling the northern kingdom
- vv2-9 Possibly a coronation hymn. Looks towards a future time of restoration

Chapters 9:8 – 10:34 Develops the idea of Assyria as the instrument of God's anger

- vv8-10:4 Detailed warnings about the signs of God's anger. Each rounded off with the phrase "For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still."
- vv5-11 How God has and will use Assyria for judgement
- vv12-19 Assyria nevertheless will also be punished
- vv20-34 Theme of the remnant of Israel and Judah and how God will deal with the nations

Chapters 11:1 – 12:6 The shoot from the stump of Jesse

- 11 vv1-10 A future king in the line of David who will usher in an age of righteousness and justice for Judah – imagery of an ideal world
- vv11-12 Theme of a new Exodus
- vv12-16 Vision is that of returning exiles anticipating chapters 40-55
- 12 Song of praise God's anger has turned away. Zion will be restored

Chapters 12 – 27

God's righteousness will be established among the nations Oracles against the nations

- 13:1 -14:27 **Against Babylon**
- vv1-2 God's purpose in overcoming Babylon is the restoration of his people
- vv12-21 Daystar theme may be an ancient myth about the planet of Venus applied to Babylon. The fall of the proud country
- 14 vv22-26 Switches back to Assyria – the fate of Babylon and Assyria are the same
- 14 vv28-32 **Against Philistia** – the "rod" refers to Assyria and the broken rod.

	The Philistines were repeatedly attacked by Assyria in Isaiah's time. probably alludes to the death of Tiglath-Pileser III in 627BCE
15:1 – 16:14	Against Moab Judgements are issued against Moab
16vv1-4	There is an appeal to Judah to accept Moabite refugees, this is coupled with a reminder of the messianic promise of a Davidic king who seeks justice and righteousness.
17:1-14	Against Syria and Northern Israel These two nations threatened Judah in 734-733BCE
18:1-7	Against Ethiopia A proud people brought low. Eventually though they will bring gifts to Zion.
19:1 – 20:6	Against Egypt The prophet counsels against thinking Egypt could help against Assyria
20 v1	Ashdod had made this mistake
20 vv2-4	describe the prophet walking naked symbolising the plight of captive people
21:1-17	Against Southern peoples
v1	Negev (southern Judah)
v11	Edom (Seir and Dumah)
v13	Arabia
22:1-25	Against Jerusalem and Judah – two oracles vv1-14 and vv15-25
v1-14	Valley of the vision is probably Hinnom
vv15-25	Vision against an official Shebna – who God will punish
v22	Phrase “key of David” is used
23:1-17	Against Tyre. A seafaring nation harking back to the time of Solomon. Even so they will be destroyed but eventually will again bring tribute to Jerusalem.

Chapters 24:1 – 27:13 **Isaiah's mini Apocalypse** a name given to it by some scholars because of the nature of the material.

24 vv 1-16	God's judgement on the earth, the people and the city (unspecified)
vv17-25	The terror from God will extend to the earth and the heavens
25 vv 1-5	Hymn of praise to God's power which brings the judgement
vv 6-13	<i>On the mountain of the Lord</i> God will produce salvation for his people
26 vv1-6	Song of Judah “We have a strong city” A song of trust in God
vv 7-21	Expectations of the righteous and the wicked at the coming of the Lord
27 vv 1-11	The Lord will punish the fleeing serpent Leviathan
vv12-13	“on that day” the Lord will gather up the people of Israel

Chapters 28 - 35 **Woes and the promise of a righteous king in Jerusalem**

28 - 31	Section is structured by 5 “Woe” sayings
28 vv 1-13	Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim (Northern Israel)
vv 14-29	Warning to the scoffers in Jerusalem
29 vv 1-14	“Ho Ariel ...” God will visit the people in judgement. Hypocrisy of the people

- Vv 15-24 Woe to those who hide deep from the Lord their counsel. Those who do evil will be cut off from God. With humility people can be pleased towards God
- 30 vv 1-7 Woe to those who put confidence in Egypt
 vv 8-14 Prophet is told to go and write the words in a book for a time when they will be heard, since they are not heard now
 vv 15-18 In returning and rest you will be saved
 vv 19-26 God the teacher will show the right way and he will grant blessings
 vv 27-33 The Lord will visit his people and the people have a song in the feast
- 31 vv 1 – 3 Woe to those who trust in Egypt
 vv4-5 God will protect Zion
 vv 6-9 Assyria shall fall by the sword – not of man
- 32 vv 1-8 A king will reign in righteousness – how the unwise will react
 vv 9-13 Warning mainly to the complacent women
 vv 14-20 There will be desolation until the spirit is poured out from on high
- 33 vv1-16 Woe to the destroyer who will in turn be destroyed. The Lord will do great things for Zion and the people will see the king and will respond to him.
- 34 A picture of judgement and desolation against Edom (in reality all the nations) v8 has a reference to the Day of the Lord. The vengeance of God will be supported by the testimony of nature and the wild beasts
- 35 Poem about God's salvation for his people. Great themes return here
 vv 1-2 Wilderness motif
 v8 The highway
 v10 The return to Zion

Chapters 36 – 39 Jerusalem saved but the threat of Babylon looms

Prose section which describes the link between the defeat of Assyria and captivity in Babylon. The narrative in these chapters is closely parallel to 2Kings 18:13 – 20:21

- vv1-3 Sets the scene in 701BCE as the Assyrian army camped outside Jerusalem
- vv4-10 Rabshekeh' message for Hezekiah – Zion's position is hopeless
 vv11-12 Eliakim, Shebna and Joah's reply
 vv13-20 Rabshekeh urges the city to surrender and not to trust Hezekiah
- 37 vv 1-4 Hezekiah sends messengers to consult Isaiah
 Vv 5-7 Isaiah's reply – Do not be afraid – The army will return back to Assyria
 Vv 8-13 These verses repeat somewhat the threat of Assyria (dual sources?)
 Vv14-20 Hezekiah spreads the letter before the Lord
 Vv21-29 Isaiah delivers God's reply – poetic section
 Vv30-35 Reassurance that Assyria will not prevail
 Vv36-38 The Assyrian withdrawal and the death of Sennacherib
- 38 vv1-8 Hezekiah's sickness and extension of his life
 Vv9-20 The king's written prayer
 V21 Healing of Hezekiah
- 39 The Babylonian rebellion against Assyria in 703BCE. This chapter reports a visit by the Babylonian king to Hezekiah who welcomed him
The chapter is out of chronological order

Isaiah criticizes Hezekiah's openness to Babylon and warns of the threat from that country which will eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem

- Chapters 40 – 55 the return to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity**
- 40:1 – 41:29 Call and return to Jerusalem
- 40 vv 1-11 God tells angelic beings to comfort his people
- vv 12-17 Yahweh alone is God and has power over all nations and history
- vv 18-26 To whom will you then liken God? Creation themes are referred to.
- Vv 27-31 Unlike the people God is everlasting
- 41 Reassurance for the people – they are called God's servant v8
- 42:1 – 44:23 The servant Chapter 42 is 1st Servant Song**
- 42 vv1-4 First servant song
- vv5-9 God reiterates his credentials as creator and says how he has called His people and given them a covenant
- vv10-17 New salvation of Israel is coming through the people's rebellion and punishment
- vv18-25 The servant Israel was deaf and blind
- 43 vv1-21 Deliverance from Babylon described in terms of a new Exodus
- Vv22-24 Prophetic accusation against sacrifices
- Vv25-28 But it is God who blots out transgressions
- 44 vv1-8 Further declarations of the coming salvation
- Vv9-20 Criticism of idol making
- Vv21-23 Celebration of Yahweh's salvation of Israel "my servant"
- 44:24- 48:22 The fall of Babylon**
- 44 vv24-28 Cyrus is referred to as 'my shepherd' and 'my anointed' he is God's agent, who will fulfil God's purpose.
- 45 vv1-8 Cyrus, the anointed, is commissioned
- Vv9-25 Sayings against Babylon and statements about the supremacy of Yahweh
- 46 vv1-2 The Babylonian idols of Bel (Marduk) and Nebo are depicted going into exile
- Vv3-4 Israel's God is incomparable
- Vv5-13 Babylonian God's are powerless when compared with Yahweh
- 47 vv1-11 Babylon is humiliated – told it will sit in the dust – it will lose its glory
- Vv12-13 Not even its famous sorcerers can cast spells to save her
- Vv14-15 Total confusion "There is no one to save you."
- 48 vv1-13 Yahweh reiterates that he will bring about his promises of long ago. There are some fundamental reminders here about creation and Israel's sinfulness
- Vv14-16 The voice here anticipates the voice of the servant and his mission
- Vv17-22 Israel is to go forth from Babylon, but a mere return to Jerusalem will not in itself bring salvation
- 49:1- 50:11 Role of the Servant**
- 49:1-12 The second Servant Song – The servant has a mission not only to Israel, but also to other nations as well. Success – despite suffering

- V13 Hymn of praise
- Vv14-26 Debate between Yahweh and Zion. Zion expresses doubts about Yahweh's ability to save and Yahweh reassures in persuasive terms
- 50:1-3 God deplores Israel's lack of faith in response to the message of salvation
- 50:4-9 The third Servant Song. On the nation's behalf he accepts the teaching of Yahweh. He has suffered but will be vindicated
- Vv10-11 Others are invited to stand with the servant

51:1-52:11 Yahweh addresses Israel

- 51:1-8 Three times the people are told by God, "Listen to me" God tells how his promise to Abraham will be fulfilled. "Look to the rock from which you were hewn"
- v9-10 Echoes of Canaanite mythical language of creation
- v12-23 More words of encouragement from God. "I am he that comforts you"
- 52:1-12 Support for the Israelites
- v 1-3 Jerusalem to be the holy city
- v3-6 The people are to be no more oppressed – remembering Egypt and Assyria
- v7-12 The good news that the exiles are returning "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings glad tidings"

52:13 – 53:12 Fourth Servant Song The servant suffers because of his mission to proclaim salvation

- v14 His suffering is visible and alarming
- v15 Nations and kings will understand this
- 53 v1-3 He was despised and rejected by men
- v4-6 He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows
- v7-9 He was killed – like a lamb who is led to the slaughter
- v10 Even so it was God who willed his suffering
- v10b-11 He will see life again and through him many will become righteous

54:1 – 55:13 Joyous conclusion

- v 1-3 Even those who are barren will sing for joy
- v 4-8 Forget the shame of your youth. The Lord has called you like a wife forsaken
- v 9-10 Remember the promises to Noah
- v11-17 Assurances of God for those who are now called "the servants of the Lord"
- 55 v1-5 Reminder of the "everlasting covenant" to call all nations
- v6-7 The exiles must grasp the opportunity to leave captivity
- v10-13 The new exodus will be like a new creation – creation or post-flood imagery

56-66 New heavens and new earth

- 56 vv1-2 Distinction is made between the faithful and the unfaithful and the theme of the Sabbath plays a key role
- Vv3-8 Foreigners and eunuchs are – surprisingly- may be counted among the faithful
- Vv10-12 The watchmen and shepherds (of Israel) are blind and “dumb dogs” In other words they are the unfaithful ones
- 57 vv1-3 The righteous, shamefully, are being neglected and perish
- Vv4-10 The people have returned to idolatrous ways, worship at “green trees” Asherah? On high mountains and the god Moloch
- Vv11-13 God’s judgement on such actions the collection of idols will not deliver them, “but he who takes refuge in me (God) shall possess the land”
- 58:1 – 59:21 The lack of justice and righteousness in Jerusalem
- Vv1-2 God’s judgement through prophetic accusation
- Vv 3-12 The topic of true and false motives for fasting and God’s response to each
- Vv13-14 Brief treatment on the topic of keeping the Sabbath
- 59 vv1-8 The way of evil which separates men from God is contrasted with the way of peace, which “they do not know”
- Vv9-15 Israel confesses its sin
- Vv15-19 Yahweh’s coming in wrath to establish his righteousness
- Vv20-22 God will come as a redeemer to Zion. Everyone will remember his covenant
- 60:1 63:6 Arise, shine; for your light has come
- 60 vv1-2 The Lord has risen upon you
- V3 Nations and kings will come to Israel
- Vv4-13 Description of the gathering of the nations
- V14 Oppressors will then submit to the Exiles
- Vv15-18 The rewards and the joys
- Vv19-22 The scene is given a cosmic dimension, yet it remains the earthly Jerusalem
- 61 vv1-7 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me (Language reminiscent of the servant – notice The use of “anointed” He proclaims the Lord’s favour
- Vv5-7 Reassurance that foreigners will be subservient
- Vv8-9 “I the Lord love justice” – the people are those whom the Lord has blessed
- Vv10-11 The message is reinforced with bridegroom and creation imagery
- 62 vv1-5 For Zion and for Jerusalem the Lord will act. 1st person is used again and the wedding imagery I used. A promise of peace for Jerusalem
- Vv6-9 The Lord has set a watchman over Jerusalem
- Vv10-12 Proclamation of salvation for Zion. The people shall be called holy
- 63:1-6 God’s coming in anger to vindicate his people “treading in the winepress”
- 63:7 – 64:12 Prayer for mercy and help
- The passage is similar to a psalm of lament
- 63 vv7-9 The steadfast love of the Lord and redemption as in days of old

- v10 Rebellion of the people
- v11-14 The Spirit of the Lord rescued them and gave them rest
- v15-19 Confession and petitions of the people
- 64 v1-4 & 8-12 Petition on behalf of the people for Jerusalem and Zion
- v 5-7 The people are unclean and unworthy to call upon the name of the Lord
- 65:1 – 66:24 God recreates with a warning about judgement
- The chapters discuss the fate of those who remain rebellious after Zion has been restored. The servants of the Lord and those who are cut off.
- Vv1-7 The ways of rebellious people
- Vv8-16 Intentions of the Lord against the will of some rebellious people
- Vv17-25 “I will create a new heaven and a new earth” – ideal state of Jerusalem – “they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain”
- 66 v1 “Heaven” is God’s throne and earth his “footstool”
- v2-5 Pointlessness of rituals of worship for their own sake
- v6 The voice of the Lord announcing :-
- v7-17 A picture of Zion’s miraculous restoration with judgement on his enemies. (v17 breaks back in to prose)
- v18-21 Return from exile and the worship of the nations at Jerusalem
- v22-23 Poetic fragment – new heavens and new earth with reference to the idea of new moon and Sabbath
- v24 Notes that rebellion against God will continue to the end.