

The earlier chapters contain many passages in which the people are strongly rebuked for their sin. In these later chapters such passages occur comparatively seldom. The earlier chapters include frequent statements that God is going to send the people into exile for their sins. In the later portion we find no such prediction; instead it is assumed that the people are already in exile for their sins, and emphasis is laid on the promise that God will deliver them from this captivity.

In the first part of the book there are many mentions of the Assyrians as the great enemy from whom danger is apparent. In the latter chapters the Assyrians are rarely mentioned but there are many references to the Babylonians (also called Chaldeans). The people are considered as in bondage to the Chaldeans, but soon to be rescued by the hand of God. Thus we see a marked difference in historical standpoint between the first and second portions of the book. This can only be explained in two ways. The explanation proposed by the critics is that the latter part of the book is written by a different author at a later time, after the exile has been in progress for many years. The other view is that Isaiah himself wrote it, but that in writing it he had primarily in mind the purpose of giving comfort to his countrymen after they would go into exile, and also of promising that God would deliver them from this exile.

If we take this latter view -- and it must be taken by all who hold to the unity of the book -- it is necessary to ask ourselves whether there would be any purpose in Isaiah's writing something which would have particular reference to a situation that would not exist until a century after his time. No one who believes in God can deny that God might, if He chose to do so, have dictated to Isaiah word for word a long book meant for people of a later age. However we must recognize that this is not the usual method by which God gave the prophetic writings. We have seen that ordinarily the prophets deal with the events of their own time. The marvelous glimpses of the future which God gives them are meant in the first place as an answer to situations in their own day, and secondly, as help and guidance for the people of God in later ages. Is such a view of these chapters also possible? It is my conviction that it is.