

Isaiah's Purpose in Writing These Chapters

I am convinced that these chapters, although dealing with events more than a century after Isaiah's time, had a very definite purpose in relation to the people of his own day. We have noticed that Isaiah had two objects before him in writing the earlier chapters of the book. One was to declare to the nation as a whole its sin against God and its duty to repent, and to tell it that God would punish it for its sin by sending it into exile. The other was to give comfort to the believers and to assure them that God had great plans for blessing those who would be true to him. Many people were loyally supporting Isaiah and individuals from the multitude of the people of Judah were constantly being won to God, though, in general, his message was not well received. More and more it was becoming apparent that the people were turning away from God. The terrible prediction of Isaiah 6:9-10 was being fulfilled, and it was clear that the exile predicted in 6:11-12 would inevitably follow.

After the death of Hezekiah, his wicked son, Manasseh, became king, and it was soon clear that the nation as a whole was apostate. 2 Kings 21 tells us how very bad conditions became at this time. According to Jewish tradition, Isaiah was actually sawn asunder by the henchmen of the wicked king. After the death of the good king Hezekiah it must have become absolutely clear to Isaiah that the nation as a whole was not going to repent and that the exile was inevitable. This would also have been obvious to the true people of God who were loyally following the prophet. Under these circumstances there was no longer a need to bring the message of rebuke and condemnation to the people as a whole. That had already been done. Now the great need was to bring words of comfort and hope to the true people of God who were following Isaiah.

There is a foreglimpse of this purpose in Isaiah 8:16 where the prophet is ordered to seal up the truth and bind up the testimony among his disciples, in order to keep the Word of God alive during difficult days. These loyal followers of the Lord, as they heard from Isaiah the message of doom and destruction against Jerusalem for its sin, and saw the increasing wickedness of the people, must have felt as if the