

most cases to determine where important sections begin and end. When one carefully follows the trend of thought and notes how the ideas develop it is usually easy to recognize the major divisions and most of the lesser ones, and this often proves to be an important step toward determining a passage's meaning.

Another important need for understanding the book is to gain some knowledge of the historical background of its various portions. Some of this knowledge can be gathered from introductory statements in the book and from words that Isaiah spoke. Additional facts can be learned from the historical accounts in the books of Kings and Chronicles. At many points in the following discussion attention will be called to helpful insights received from examination of the historical background.

While all that Isaiah wrote had a very definite meaning for the people of his own day it must always be kept in mind that Isaiah wrote not only for his contemporaries but also for future generations. That portion of the utterances of the prophets which God caused to be preserved as part of His inerrant Word had important meaning for future believers as well as for those who heard him speak. This is true not only because of the similarity of later situations to those of Isaiah's time; the teachings that the Lord led the prophets to preserve are often so expressed as to reveal great truths about God and about God's plans. Sometimes these truths are explained in detail; at other times they may be hard to understand fully until we examine related aspects of New Testament teaching.

The New Testament books often quote or refer to a passage in the Old Testament as proof of some New Testament doctrine. Sometimes the relevance of the quotation is not immediately apparent, or its use may even seem