Course BI 4222.4322 Isaiah; Commentary on 1:1-6:13;  
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Structural problems:

1. We are trained to expect the call of the prophet to be at the beginning of the book, cf. Jer 1.

2. Placing of the call of Isaiah in what is now labeled “ch. 6.” seems strange.
   a. Many leave present structure open to question
   b. Others take a chronological view—present dependent on chronology
   c. The following are typical.

3. Oswalt (1:80), sees chapter 6 as the solution to the problems posed in 1-5
   a. Thus 1-6 are microcosm of the rest of the book
   b. Chapter 1 functions similarly to introduce, chs. 1-6 (Oswalt, 1:81).
   c. Israel’s present state (1:2-17, 2:6:-4:1; 5:1-30) is compared to what she will become (1:18-20; 2:1-5; 4:2-6)

4. In this earliest phase of Isaiah’s career was primarily the people at large (Hayes/Irvine, 62).
   a. “. . . Isaiah sought to convince his listeners that the recent catastrophic earthquake [cf. Amos 1:1, rcb], was the work of Yahweh and that the people’s response to that even was not what Yahweh demanded (1:2-20) (Hayes/Irvine, 62)
   b. The earthquake had been a “Day of Yhwh” exposing anything human, 2:6-22.
   c. Israel’s past, present, and future are interrelated (Hayes/Irvine, 62).
      (1) The present is compared to the past
      (2) Because divine purification lay in the future, Zion’s inhabitants should “walk in the light of their beliefs about
d. Israel’s rulers are condemned and Zion’s role in the future is proclaimed, 3:1-15; 3:16-4:6.

e. As war was continually threatened the present and future are described as a trampling of God’s people, the vineyard of the Lord, 5:1-30

f. Chapter 6 represents a change in the focus of the prophet (Hayes/Irvine, 109).

(1) Chapters 1-5 are concerned with social issues, while chapters 7ff. Are concerned with political issues.

(2) Chapter 6, is not a call narrative, but represents a shift in Isaiah’s ministry.

II. SUPERSCRIPTION, 1:1

NRS Isaiah 1:1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

A. Follows pattern of all prophetic inscriptions except Ezekiel, Jonah, Haggai, Zechariah, and even these identify the prophet, time, and material

B. Vision: הָזוֹן, hazon, is unusual, for it is found elsewhere only in Obadiah.

1. More frequent phrase is “The word of the Lord,” etc.

2. “The use of the noun vision and the infinitive to see, however, would not have been out of keeping in describing the function of a prophet or the content of a prophetic message” (Hayes/Irvine, 67).

3. The vision pertains to the whole book.

C. Of Isaiah, son of Amoz:

1. Mediating source of the vision; means “Yhwh saves.”
2. “Amoz” identified as a scribe on an extant seal; thus tempting to see Isaiah as a scribe (Oswalt)

3. The fact that no other information is given may indicate that he or his father was well known.

D. *Which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:* two different political entities

1. Jerusalem, seat of government and home of royal family.

2. Judah, “old territorial state with roots going back to the older tribal structures” (Hayes/Irvine, 68).

3. At the least it represents all the covenant people


5. “Jerusalem” occurs 49 times–30 in chs. 1-39; 19 in 40-66

E. *Days of Uzziah, etc.:* Sets the Socio-Political situation of the day, 2 Chron 26:1-15

III. **ISRAEL’S CONDITION RESULTS IN AN EARTHQUAKE (?) AS PUNISHMENT, 1:2-20.**

A. These verses break down into two sections:

1. Israel’s condition, 1:2-9
2. Hypocritical worship instead of justice, 1:10-20
3. Both sections contain the following *form critical elements* (Hayes/Irvine, 70).

   a. *Accusation*–addressed to people in indirect form, 2-3
   b. *Direct address*–confronting the people’s condition, 4-9
   c. *Divine instructions*–which also contain admonitions, 10-17
   d. *Divine invitation*–for proper understanding, 18-20

B. *Israel’s condition, 1:2-9*

1. **2-3—Accusation:**
God calls the heavens and earth as disinterested witnesses to listen to his charges;

b. Parental language describing the people as “rebellious children” evokes a sympathetic, universal interest, 2

c. The people are dumber than farm animals, 3.

d. “Isaiah’s entire argument in this section was based on an appeal to common sense and to natural phenomena. . . . the use of the parent-child example was a way of drawing on a universal and emotional relationship” (Hayes/Irvine, 71).

2. 4-9—Direct Address: Confrontation of people

a. 4: Uses extremely bitter language describing how Israel has sinned: has forsaken the Lord, 4

b. 5-6a: Judah is sick all over due to the “injuries [the] people received in the earthquake” which is interpreted as a parental beating (Hayes/Irvine, 73)

c. 7-8: depict the destroyed countryside in terms of that earthquake (looters, etc.), or alternatively an invading army.

d. 9: Destruction would have been complete had not the grace of God left a remnant to be save—this one of the main themes played out in the book.

(1) NT usage: 1:9; Rom 9:29

“Although Judah would go into captivity, a remnant would return (10:20-21); likewise under the Messiah a remnant will be saved (Rom 9:29) according to election of divine grace (Rom. 11:5). Jehovah will bring about the salvation of the redeemed and rescued of every age. Note, however, that they always comprise only a remnant—a small portion—never the whole” (Hailey, 39).

C. God’s Desire: Justice not Hypocritical Worship, 1:10-20

1. 10-17: “Prophetic Torah” (Divine instruction) describing the folly of
empty worship (maximizing the physical & minimizing spiritual); intensely bitter language

a. People are described metaphorically as Sodomites and Gomorrahites, 10.

b. Sacrifices are a waste and even abomination, 11-13

c. Religious festivals make God tired, 14

d. God turns his back on their worship, 15

e. Commanded to cleanse themselves spiritually (16) and practice good deeds religiously (17)

f. “The times did not call for sacrifice but social service, not for prayer but repentance” (Hayes/Irvine, 77).

2. 18-20: Divine Address: Concludes the contrast between cultic and ethical behavior of 10-17; suggests that the only profitable course of action is obedience and submission.


b. 19: Forgiveness and cleansing will be the result of a changed attitude

c. 20: But punishment and destruction will be the result of continued rebellion.

d. Omen Material:

(1) (18) Come now let us reason together,
says Yhwh.
if your sins are like scarlet,
then they shall be as white as snow;
if they are red like crimson,
then they shall become like wool.
(19) If you are willing and obedient,
then you shall eat the good of the land,
(20) But if you refuse and rebel, 
then you will be devoured by the sword; 
for the mouth of Yhwh has spoken. (AR)

*Sittenkanon:* [If] he pays attention [to] God, 
then mercy will fall to him. 
(95:71; cf. 99:31; 103:32; 105:58)

(2) Isaiah 1:18-20 is set in the context of an invitation of God to his people to come and reason with him concerning their sins (18a). The passage is not usually translated as a conditional sentence; restoring the conditional idea allows the full meaning of the text to come through. Yhwh desires to discuss Israel's sinful condition. "If" (not "though") the discussions reveal that their sins "are as scarlet," etc., this will be corrected, "they will become as white as snow," etc. Verse 18 also states two parallel possibilities along with their result. Sins that are like scarlet (protasis) will become as snow (apodosis); sins that are like crimson (protasis) will become as wool (apodosis, 18c). Verses 19-20 use the conditional structure to express the options open to Israel. Obedience (protasis) would bring blessings in the land (apodosis, 19), while disobedience (protasis) would bring destruction in the land (apodosis, 20). The Sittenkanon expresses the idea in proverbial fashion—listening to God brings mercy.

IV. GOD’S RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT, 1:21-31

A. 21-23: Accuses Zion of the present in light of the Zion of the past.

1. *How the city has become a whore*—called into question the city’s “fidelity, honesty, and devotion” (Hayes/Irvine, 80).

2. *Murders*—may have reference to the assassinations of the three previous rulers of Jerusalem—Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:1-16), Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:20-21), and Amaziah (2Kgs 14:19-21)—or to the murderous society that the nation had become

3. Such conditions have resulted in an adulterated, or impure society, in which the rulers were primarily responsible.
B. 24-31: The coming punishment will have a purifying effect; this punishment removes the evils of the present and returns the nation to the conditions of past days.

V. GOD’S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, 2:1-5

A. V. 1: Word of the Lord came...–Statement of message reception identifying what follows as a message from the Lord.

B. 2:2-5–Passage near identical to Micah 4:1-4, although Micah may 4:4 may reflect the peasant’s perspective.

1. Makes use of ANE concept of “cosmic mountain” located at center of the world. (Hayes/Irvine, 82).
   a. In the future the temple mount will be located above all mountains–increased significance, v. 2
   b. Great pilgrimages will be made to Zion by all peoples for the purpose of learning God’s will, 3.
   c. God’s law will originate in Zion, God will judge the nations there, and war will end, 4
   d. People are challenged “to walk in the light of Yahweh and . . . live in the light of the vision’s judgment on the present and the hopes of its ultimate realization” (Hayes/Irvine, 83), 5.

2. “Latter Days”:
   a. Dan 2:28–days of the Roman Empire
   b. Joel 2:28 quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17–establishment of church
   c. 1 Pet 1:20–Jesus in “last times”
   d. “Therefore the latter days spoken of by Isaiah are to be understood as that period in which God would make known His law through Jesus Christ and send it forth from Jerusalem and from Zion. Isaiah was speaking of that which began on Pentecost and
continues now. We are living in ‘the last times,’ therefore the latter days (Hailey, 46).

e. “It is unto this mountain that the Christians addressed in the book of Hebrews had come: ‘for ye are not come unto a mountain that might be touched [Sinai]. . . , but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem . . . [the] church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven” (Hheb. 12:18-23), which is ‘the house of God’ (1 Tim. 3:15)” (Hailey, 47).


A. One of the most problematic texts of Isaiah.

1. Most commentators interpret as a future punishment

2. Hayes/Irvine interpret “a catastrophic Day of Yhwh,” viz., “the earthquake” (83-4)

   “The speech is more of a theological discourse on the frailty of humanity than a prediction about the future. Its central thrust is to argue that the earthquake was Yahweh’s work and that when Yahweh acts, as in the earthquake diaster, all human efforts pale in significance,” (84).

B. Introductory Address to Yhwh, 6a.

1. Accusation against God with “neglect” of his people

2. The כ, ki, “because,” connects with the previous verses, explaining why there they were exhorted to “walk in God’s light.”

a. הָיָתָה, natawhtah (Qal Pf 2ms from vjn nts, leave, forsake) give the idea of “left unattended.”

b. God has abandoned his people in their present condition.

3. This accusation of God by the prophet was designed to catch the attention of the audience and led them to expect and accusation against God.

4. The prophet thus sets up the people to pay attention to his argument.
C. **Human Planning vs. God’s Power, 6b-11.**

1. “Full,” “fill,” etc. is used 4 times
   a. People are full of pagan customs
   b. They are full of silver and gold
   c. They are full of chariots and horses
   d. They are full of idols.

2. Economic nor military power are would be able to withstand when disaster struck, 7-8

3. No one can stand the destruction, 9

4. There is no where to hide, 10

5. Everyone will be brought low, 11

   “Because of their idolatry, their pride and arrogance, their accumulation of wealth, and the consequent removal of God from their thoughts, the people must be brought low. The nation must be debased. In the humbling of these vain and haughty people, Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day” (Hailey, 51).

D. **Description of Earthquake (?), 12-17**–None of man’s war inventions could withstand God’s punishment.

1. “A day” of Yhwh–punishment

2. Four things brought low–cedars of Lebanon; mountains and hills; towers and fortified cities; ships of Tarshish.

3. All of these point to their arrogance–“all that is proud and lofty; all that is lifted up an high,” v. 12

E. **Human Effort vss. God’s Power, 18-21**–Theological evaluation of the human defeat when it is confronted by God–desire destruction rather than confrontation by God–God is exalted

F. **Yielding Confidence in Human Ability, 22**–Isaiah’s appeal to his people to trust
in God rather than selves.

VII. PUNISHMENT WILL RESULT IN ANARCHY, CHILDREN’S RULE, 3:1-15

A. Verses describe the result if children ruled the nation

B. Description of anarchy, 1-7

1. God will remove the social and institutional pillars of society, 1-3
   a. 11 different categories of people are mentioned
   b. Both military and civilian are covered.

2. Children will be made leaders, 4

3. The result is what might be expected–ineffectual rule, anarchy, 5

4. Things will become so bad that no one would want to rule, 6-7

C. State as it actually was, 8-12

1. Judah and Jerusalem are pictured as a falling man, 8a

2. Everything about the people is against Yhwh, 8b-9a, 12


4. Indictment of the leaders as the real problem, 12.

   “Inexperienced and immature rulers who act like boys and are controlled by dominating women cannot give a people sound leadership. Rather they become oppressors of the people, causing them to err. . . .” (Hailey, 55).

D. Judgment of leaders, 13-15

1. The nature of Yhwh as judge–he brings cases and judges people, 13

2. Yhwh enters into judgment against the leaders by presenting divine accusations and evidence of their oppressive ways, 14-15
VIII. WOMEN OF JERUSALEM PUNISHED 3:16-4:6

A. Overview

1. This oracle is similar in pattern to the one in 1:1-2:25

2. A prosperous period; no external threats to the city

3. Contains both prose and poetic material

4. “. . . the speech opens with the quotation of a divine oracle (3:16), but before the oracle is completed, the quotation form is abandoned and the Deity is referred to in the third person (3:17)” (Hayes/Irvine, 93).

5. “. . . sometimes the women of Jerusalem seem to be talked about (3:16-17; 4:1) while in other places, it appears to be Jerusalem who is addressed or spoken about (3:25-26)” (Hayes/Irvine, 93).

6. Structure:
   a. Accusation against the women of Zion, 3:16
   b. Description of judgement against them, 3:17-4:1
   c. Description of future state, 4:2-6

B. 3:16:

1. Possible to read 16a as the charge proper with the rest of the verse the supporting evidence for the charge.

2. Difficult to determine whether the seductive behavior was merely the normal carriage or whether it was deliberate.

3. The behavior should be compared to the that of the princes in 3:14-15 and Amos 4:1-3

C. 3:17-4:1:

1. Compared to brief accusation, comes a detailed description of judgement.
   a. Physical affliction, 3:17, 24c
b. Removal of luxuries, 3:18-24

c. Deprivation of men, 3:25-4:1

2. Physical affliction, 3:17, 24c: radical reversal of status including “total exposure” (baldness or total nudity?)

3. Removal of luxuries, 3:18-24: may be type of things given up to pay tribute in national emergency.


   a. Many women for one man resulting in marriage proposals by force.
   
   b. “Isaiah may be indicating in this text that men would be so scarce that women would volunteer to become secondary wives or concubines if only they could have the status of some legal sexual relationship to a man (see Exod. 21:7-9, where the relationship is based on the man’s purchase of the woman)” (Hayes/Irvine, 95).
   
   c. By v. 26 the mourning of the women has shifted to that of the city for the loss of her men.

D. 4:2-6: References what will follow after the punishment; several expressions

   
   2. Jerusalem pictured as a beautiful vine into which fugitives from Israel will flee
   
   
   4. “New Jerusalem” will exist after God had washed away filth of Old Jerusalem–comparison of old with new (church and baptism?)
   
   5. Special conditions created over the city, reminiscent of the pillar of fire and cloud in wilderness–God’s care.

E. End of Cycle:

12
1. 2:2-4 pictures Jerusalem as God purposed
2. 2:5-4:1 pictures Jerusalem as it was—sinful, decayed, corrupt
3. 4:2-6 pictures Jerusalem when redeemed
4. “In the first section Jerusalem-Zion is set forth as the center of God’s rule, the capitol of his spiritual kingdom, from which will go forth his word and law and to which the nations (the gentiles) will come. . . . The second section sets forth the failure of the people under their present order; they are proud and put their trust in the arm of flesh. Their wickedness must be purged by judgment. In the third section the emphasis is on the new Jerusalem-Zion made glorious by the presence of the Branch and of Jehovah” (Hailey, 58-9).

IX. A BAD VINEYARD, 5:1-30

A. **Historical Period:** Hayes/Irvine (99) put during time of Menahem (2 Kgs 15:8-16)
   1. Vineyard’s walls demolished/trampled fits with events during this period.
   2. 5:13 indicates that people had already been in captivity—Menahem’s period
   3. “Nation afar off” may refer to Assyria in the days of Tiglath-pileser
   4. Evidence of earthquake is still visible, 14-17, 25
   5. “The chapter presents the dark and ugly picture of a people who had sown the seeds of profligacy [i.e., sin, corruption] and lust and who were now reaping the evil fruits and consequences of their deeds. To a people who boasted of their special favor in the eyes of Jehovah and who looked upon their material prosperity under the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham as an express of that favor, Isaiah’s words must have appeared as the rankest heresy. The chapter contains no promise or expression of the divine grace of God except the favor He had sown in planting the vineyard” (Hailey, 63).

B. **Structure:**
1. **Introduction**, owner and vineyard, 1-7
   
a. The audience probably anticipated something like the “Song of Solomon,” but were surprised at the lack of sexual overtones, and almost immediately recognized that it was directed at themselves.

b. 1b-2 forms the content of the song, which presents a theological history of Israel.

c. 3-6, either Isaiah assumes the role of owner of vineyard, or the verses represent a quote from “My Beloved,” or “Yhwh.” 6b bridges the extended metaphor, by having the owner do what no normal owner could do—control the weather. This prepares for v. 7.

d. 7, the vineyard is identified as Israel, for whom such a punishment awaits. Note

   (1) “he expected justice (םישפ, mišpāt) but saw bloodshed (םישפах, mispah); righteousness (צדק, tsēḏāqāh), but heard a cry (צדקא, tsēdaqāh)!” contains a wordplay

2. **Exposition**, failure of vineyard–owner’s reaction, 8-24a
   
a. Seeks to do two things:

   (1) Israel and Judah have yielded bad fruit

   (2) Yhwh had already begun the tearing down process

b. Accomplishes this structurally via use of “woe.”

   (1) “Woe” sections (8, 11-12, 18-19, 20, 21, 22, 23) describe evil behavior “wild grapes”

   (2) “Therefore” sections (13, 14-17, 24a) describes actions and results, sometimes present, sometimes future, that have or will occur.

c. 8, 11-12,18-19,20, 21,22,23: There are those who unethically acquire land and possessions (8), pursue strong drink and partying
(11-12), excel in sin while haughtily challenging God to punish (18-19), reverse common ethical and moral definitions (20), think themselves wise (21), practice drunkenness (22), and use bribes to change justice (23).

d. 13, 14-17, 24a: These will ultimately go into exile (13), details of that punishment and blessings that will occur at that time (14-17), and God will destroy them as fire consumes rotten wood (24a).

3. Conclusion, penalties, 24b-30

a. 24b: Summarizing statement condemning the people

b. 25: Basis for punishment in the past—people’s wrongdoing.

c. 26-30: For punishment in the future—people’s wrongdoing

C. Excursis: three distinct prophecies:

1. Chapter 1 = corruption and sickness bring the people to judgment from which a remnant will be saved

2. Chapters 2-4 = Zion in Isaiah’s day was corrupt, rebellious, etc., but in the latter days the ideal Zion made pure through washing and purification

3. Chapter 5 = Vineyard which produced bad fruit is set for judgment

X. Isaiah Called to Servanthood, 6:1-13

A. Hayes/Irvine (108ff) offer following analysis:

1. Chapter 6 is an account of Isaiah’s initial call

   a. 1-5 comes from an earlier period
   b. 1-5 best interpreted in light of Uzziah/Jotham’s reign
   c. 1-5 is concerned with social issues; 7ff, political
   d. Call to repentance in 1-5 contrasts with hardening of 6:9-10
   e. In ch. 6, Isaiah is not really called, but volunteers.

2. This autobiographical narrative was formulated to justify his new political stance following Uzziah’s death
3. Ch. 6 indicates that Isaiah went through purificatory process he had preached in 1-5

4. Ch. 6 contains elements of rites associated with coronation of new king.

5. By the time of this vision Judean society was totally polarized:
   a. Judah/Jerusalem formed one group and were totally estranged from their counterparts
   b. Their counterparts—general Judean population

B. Structure:

1. The prophet’s vision of God, 1-4
2. The prophet’s vision of self and purification, 5-7
3. The prophet’s commission, 8-13

C. The Prophet’s Vision of God, 1-4

1. Time of vision—important—occurs at crisis moment in life of prophet

2. How should the prophet function in new administration? Where was country going with loss of such a powerful king? cf. 2 Chron 26:1-15
   a. What would the nation do?
   b. Who would lead it?
   c. How would Judah survive?
   d. Who was running the government?
   e. What direction would the country go in now?!
   f. Much of what Uzziah had accomplished hung in the balance.
   g. Our political and religious leaders often seem in a tailspin, and we wonder, “What will we do?!”
   h. Isaiah lost his king, but found his Lord.

3. The Trinity?
   a. God on the throne—breaks down into Jesus on the throne (John

c. Serphim had sang “Holy, Holy, Holy is Yhwh...” thus mentioning the first in the Godhead

D. The Prophet's Vision of Self and Purification, 5-7

1. Isaiah’s reaction is produced from the realization of how evil he is in the presence of the absolute holy

2. Purification removes the guilt and prepares for the new mission.

3. Isaiah had been preaching about all sorts of important stuff

4. He had *publicized* his religion:
   a. Focused on areas they needed to correct and improve.
   b. His preaching during this period, defended the Lord and pointed out how bad evil his society and brethren were.
   c. He had the “*Sense of ‘they’*”–not “the sense of ‘Me’”

5. But when he “saw the Lord” he *personalized* his religion
   a. He came to understand how sinful he was and what part he was playing in the problems of his society
   b. He now possessed “*Sense of ‘Me’*”–not “the sense of ‘They’”
   c. This represents repentance and a desire to correct the situation by correcting self, rather than others.

6. We too need to *Personalize* our faith
   a. Posses a “*Sense of ‘Me’*”–not “the sense of ‘They’”
   b. Instead focusing on what is wrong with our country, church, job, family, recognize “*a better world begins with me*”–I am the salt of
E. **The Prophet’s Commission, 8-13**

1. Has much in common with Micaiah’s vision of 1Kgs 22:19-23

2. Isaiah volunteers to serve as God’s agent

3. His task is negative—to ensure that the unconvertible receive the punishment they deserve, 8-10.

4. Upon asking how long, he is told until the exile is complete, v. 13.

5. As such this chapter, along with 1-5, is a microcosm of the rest of the book.

6. **Isaiah’s New Focus:** Isaiah’s change in attitude allows God to give him an opportunity for greater service.

   a. An invitation is extended, “Who will go for us?”

   b. Isaiah’s refocus is evident:

      (1) He doesn’t respond, “Send someone.”

      (2) Rather, “Here am I, send me.”

   c. God responds by sending him to preach to the nation, a message that will largely be a failure.

   d. Isaiah Recognizes:

      (1) That God is in control

      (2) That he should not focus “on the sins of the nation,”

      (3) But focuses on being God’s servant to that nation

   e. He thus asks only, “for how long?”

F. **NT Usage:**

1. 6:9; Luke 8:10:
2. 6:9-10; Matt 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Acts 28:26
3. 6:10; John 12:40: