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## OT 730 Isaiah (IBS)

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**ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
Department of English Bible

OT (IBS) 730 Isaiah  
3 Hours

Spring, 2000  
Instructor: Lawson G. Stone

**I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course studies the book of Isaiah as a whole and its most significant parts, with special attention to the composition and preservation of the prophetic book and the historical and theological context of the prophet's ministry. Emphasis is placed on hermeneutical principles bearing on the interpretation of prophetic literature as encountered in this book and its treatment within the Bible as a whole.

**II. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. **Methodology.** Emphasis will be on observing and interpreting books as wholes. By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:
1. **Observation:** Survey books a wholes, survey various units and sub-units within a book, observe details of strategic paragraphs and verses, ask key interpretive questions regarding observations.
  2. **Interpretation:** Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation processes; integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to achieve a coherent understanding of the unit studied.
  3. **Evaluation and Application:** Place truths in the flow of biblical revelation so as to evaluate their applicability to other times and places; identify contermoporary situations appropriately addressed by the biblical message; make the applications.
  4. **Correlation:** relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials, thus moving toward a biblical theology.
- B. **Content.** The student shall be able to:
1. Think through the contents of the book of Isaiah wihtout recourse to the printed text;
  2. Identify significant passages in Isaiah and interpret them contextually;
  3. Demonstrate the importance of sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from this book;
  4. Delineate the development of major themes of the book of Isaiah and their signficance, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
  5. Discuss the historical and religious background of Isaiah, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding the book, especially as may be derived inductively at the level of inquiry conducted in this course; also demonstrate ability to use this data in the interpretation of this book.
- C. **Attitude:** We hope the student will:
1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the Bible, resulting in a desire to study other books methodically;

2. Desire to make the book of Isaiah the object of passionate study and reflection throughout life;
3. Intend to use Isaiah seriously in spiritual growth, pastoral care, and preaching.

### III. COURSE MATERIALS

#### A. Required Texts:

1. Biblical Texts
  - A. A modern, standard (non-paraphrasing) translation of the Bible with minimal editorial clutter in the layout. The *New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition* is still the leading “literal” translation and is the text of reference. Revised *Standard Version* and *New Revised Standard Version* are also useful. The *New International Version* is becoming dated, but is still adequate. The “New King James” is of little use in a course such as this, but the KJV of 1611 remains unsurpassed at capturing the grandeur and cadence of Isaiah’s messages.
  - B. More Paraphrastic versions are worth consulting at various points in your study. These include: *Good News Bible, New Century Version, Living Bible, New Living Translation*.
2. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah* (NICOT) Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
3. High Recommended: *Methodical Bible Study*, Robert A. Traina. You will have already acquired this book in earlier IBS department courses.

#### B. Supplemental Material

Periodically additional material may be assigned. Students wishing to pursue further study will find a bibliography attached.

### IV. COURSE PROCEDURES

#### A. Inductive Studies of Isaiah

The most important part of the course is the student’s own, independent, direct study of Isaiah, due at class time on the dates assigned.

“Independent” means that lessons are the notes of the student’s own direct study of the Bible, with reference to secondary sources only as appropriate—to minimally interpretive works during the course of study and to more interpretive works only after considerable study of one’s own. Then the student will be expected to give evidence of critical interaction with interpretive literature used. When secondary sources are used, clear documentation will appear.

Independent excludes reference to any previous student’s work in the course and to lecture notes from any previous semester of this class or any other class. It is assumed that these notes and all work submitted for this course is the student’s own work, done specifically for this class and not previously submitted as part of any other course’s requirements. Exceptions to these procedures will be clearly announced.

Thoroughness, accuracy, and the ability to penetrate beyond the superficial understanding of the text will be sought. See below for criteria of excellence.

**B. Format**

Lessons must be legibly written and clearly labeled with name, lesson number, due date, and time spent on the lesson. All pages submitted must be stapled or paper-clipped together. Please, no folders or covers.

**C. Evaluation and Feedback**

1. Lessons. All lessons are to be finished by the due date and turned in for evaluation. They will be returned for class sessions.
2. Classroom instruction and interaction. The student's main source of information for self-evaluation will be the class sessions. By comparing their work with the method and content of the instruction and by asking questions and participating in class dialogue, they should be able to identify points of weakness and strength.

**D. Grade Components**

About 6 lessons will be graded, in addition to the final lesson. Grades given on lessons reviewed will be equal value in computing the semester grade, with the exception of the final lesson which will count as a double lesson.

Work submitted late will not be accepted except in case of emergency or by previous arrangement with the instructor.

Except for the first and last lessons, students may omit 1 lesson and must notify the instructor at the time the lesson was due.

**E. Criteria for Excellence**

1. Induction. Base conclusions on the concrete evidence of the text. Reason inferentially.
2. Accuracy. Draw valid inferences from the text, give references.
3. Originality. Take a fresh approach to the material, using your own words and finding new ways of expressing biblical truth.
4. Depth. Probe beneath the surface of the text to find those truths which are not self-evident.
5. Organization. Systematize your findings so as to correlate similar ones and so as to indicate logical progression, relative importance and the intended interrelation of your ideas.
6. Relative Thoroughness. Be as complete as possible within the time limits.
7. Clarity. Try to express your thoughts in an unambiguous way.

**F. Course Requirements**

1. Completion and submission of assignments in writing.
2. Punctual attendance and eager, productive participation in class dialogue can lead to an elevation of the final grade by one degree, i.e. B+>A-. The opposite applies as well.

3. Responsible handling of difficulty with class content or requirements, of late work, of absences, or other matters related to the class.

### Inductive Studies in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

- 1A. SURVEY of the BOOK AS A WHOLE-Materials (8 Hours) DUE: Feb 17**
- A. Initial Overview-**
1. Give brief titles to each chapter and cluster of chapters of the book.
  2. Remember to keep titles descriptive, suggestive, and brief.
  3. Use a chart to record your titles, leaving space for other data as you gather it
- B. Identify Various Types of Materials:** As you are able, note the following types of material and where they occur:
1. Poetry and prose
  2. Narrative, speeches, prayers
  3. Superscriptions (headings)
  4. Chronological references
  5. Persons, Groups, Historical Events, and places named
- C. Discover Main Divisions:** Try to determine the natural groupings of blocks of material based on the observations above. As much as possible, establish divisions based on *empirical observations of formal features of the text* and not on hunches or impressions about deeper structural relationships.
- D. Structure:** Note you will be refining your sense of how the material divides up as you work through structure
1. Observe the **structural relationships** operative between and through the major units of the book. Describe the **specific materials** involved in each structure, so that the meaning of what you have observed structurally is clear.
  2. Ask the **standard interpretive questions**, adapted to these specific materials and focused on major structural relationships and the materials so structured.
- F. Strategic Areas:** give reasons for each area chosen as strategic
- G. Higher Critical Data** should be noted. This includes specifically material pointing to the *concrete circumstances of the prophet*, his *audience*, and the *formation of the book*.
- H.** Note **other impressions/questions** relating to the book.
- 2. Isaiah 1:1 Historical Background (2 Hours) DUE: Feb. 22**
1. How does the writer identify the material that is to follow? What points of reference are made to situate the material?
  3. *Read* Oswalt, 3-31.
  5. Prepare a chart or other visual presentation of the data on the setting of the book.
- 3. Isaiah 1:2-31 Segment Survey (2 Hours) DUE: Feb 24**
1. Apply the suggestions in “Inductive Studies in the Old Testament” (ISOT) “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. Trace in as much detail as you have time for *precisely how this segment prepares the reader for the rest of the book*.
  3. What theological issues are raised by this segment?

- 4. Isaiah 2:1-4:6 Larger Segment Survey (2 Hours)** DUE: Feb 29
1. Apply the suggestions in “Inductive Studies in the Old Testament” (ISOT) “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. The following are some “hints” designed to help you get at key aspects of the material, not a substitute for the standard segment survey process:
    - a. List *images* and *figures of speech* used in this section.
    - b. Note references to the concrete everyday life of the Judeans—objects, places, attitudes, roles, etc. How familiar was the prophet with the physical realities of everyday life? Any idea what social stratum might be implied by such references?
    - c. How are 2:1-4 and 4:2-6 alike? Different? In what ways does each resonate with its context? How does 2:5-4:1 relate to these two units?
- 5. Isaiah 5 Segment Survey (2 Hours)** DUE: Mar 2
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. Look back over your studies of chaps. 1-4. How might (or might not) chaps 1-5 be taken as a unit? Does it conclude with 5 or go on to 6?
  3. Read Oswalt 171-176. How does this illuminate the structure of the unit?
- 6. Isaiah 6 Segment Survey (2 Hours)** DUE: Mar 7
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. Read 2 Kings 15:1-7 and 2 Chronicles 26. What is the significance of “In the Year King Uzziah Died?” in 6:1
  3. Review your notes on chaps. 1-5, what relationship might exist between 1-5 and 6?
  4. In “Studying a Selected Passage: Detailed Observation and Interpretation” in ISOT, there are noted 3 “Bases for Selection” for choosing specific points to pursue in depth. From this chapter, identify one item for each basis.
- 7. Isaiah 6:5 Detailed Observation (2 Hours)** DUE: Mar 9
1. Use the suggestions in ISOT for “Studying a Selected Passage: Detailed Observation and Interpretation” and make as many specific observations, raising the related interpretative questions, on Isaiah 6:5
  2. To the extent that you are able, read Oswalt on this chapter.
- 8. Isaiah 6:5 Interpretation** DUE: Mar 14
1. Use the suggestions in ISOT for “Studying a Selected Passage: Detailed Observation and Interpretation” to focus on the question “What is the meaning of ‘I am ruined’ in Isaiah 6:5?”
  2. Make use of Hebrew tools for this assignment. Note that the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, while valuable, is out of date. Be sure to consult more up-to-date sources. See the suggestions on “word study” in ISOT for pointers.
  3. Putting the prophet’s cry in the context of the whole, how would you summarize the state of his own awareness and self-perception before God?
- 9. Isaiah 7-12 (4 Hours)** DUE: Mar 21
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.

2. How is this material different from what we saw in chaps. 1-5
  3. Read 2 Kings 16. What connection exists with Isaiah 6-12? What do we learn from the Kings material that we don't know from the Isaiah material?
- 10. Isaiah 13-23: Survey** DUE: Mar 28
1. Conduct a Segment Survey of this rather long unit
  2. Looking back at your book survey, what function do you find this section serving in the flow of the larger book?
  3. Examine the language used in chaps. 13-14. To what does "Babylon" refer? Look at how "Babylon" figures in the book also in 21:9 and 23:13; chap. 39, chaps. 40-55. For fun, compare Rev. 18!
- 11. Isaiah 24-27 Segment Survey** DUE: Mar 30
1. Do the standard unit survey for this section
  2. Pay attention to the language and imagery of this section. What type of material elsewhere in the Bible does it remind you of?
- 12. Isaiah 28-35** DUE: Apr 13
1. Survey this unit
  2. What does the prophet specifically censure regarding the gentile nations in this unit?
  3. What relationship exists between 13-23 on the one hand, and 18-35 on the other?
- 13. Isaiah 36-39 (4 Hours)** DUE: Apr 18
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
  2. How does this passage fitly draw the whole discourse of 1:4-9:26 to a close?
  3. How might chaps. 36-39 relate structurally to chaps. 1-35?
  4. Compare this story with 1 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chron. 32. Do you see any differences in point of view or perspective on this crisis?
  5. It would be *very worthwhile* at this point to summarize the prophet's evaluation of Zion/Jerusalem.
- 14. Isaiah 40-55 (4 Hours)** DUE: Apr 25
1. This is a very difficult section to divide into units because it flows so seamlessly.
  2. Compile every reference that provides a clue as the setting of the audience to which the prophet speaks.
  3. What are the main *content emphases* of this unit. How do they compare to chaps. 1-39?
  4. How does the literary style and form compare to chaps. 1-39?
  6. An intriguing article to read is: George Adam Smith, *The Book of Isaiah: XL-LXVI*, the "Expositors Bible," vol. 2, the lecture entitled "The Date of Isaiah xl-lxvi."
  7. If you have time, reflect on one or more of the following interpretative issues:

- a) Review this material and glean out all the passages dealing with the “servant” theme.
- b) Can you trace an internal, thematic development running through the passages dealing with the servant?
- c) Are there any other biblical personages that the “servant” reminds you of?
- d) Can you see connections between each servant passage and its immediate context?
- e) Do the servant passages provide any key(s) to the overall movement of Chaps. 40-55?
- f) Everyone who studies this section has to make two decisions: First, do you think this comes from the Babylonian exile? Second, who is really the object/subject of the servant passages? Who is the “servant of Yahweh?”

- 15. Isaiah 40 Segment Survey (2 Hours)** DUE: Apr 27
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. A key issue in this chapter is separating the various voices one hears—who is speaking, to whom, and when.
- 16. Isaiah 40:31 Detailed Observation (2 Hours)** DUE: May 2
1. Conduct a detailed observation of this passage
  2. Identify a specific question raised in your observations that you wish to pursue for further interpretation.
- 17. Isaiah 40:31 Interpretation (2 Hours)** DUE: May 4
1. Answer as thoroughly and precisely as you can the interpretative question you singled out for further study in the preceding lesson
  2. How might the various possibilities regarding the setting of the prophet and his audience open doors on applying your interpretation to contemporary faith?
- 18. Isaiah 56-66 (4 Hours)** DUE: May 11
1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
  2. Note passages pointing to the setting(s) of the speaker and audience. Is it the same as 1-39? 40-55?
  3. How do the *content emphases* of 56-66 compare or contrast with 1-39 and/or 40-55.
  4. How do the style and form of 56-66 compare/contrast with 1-39 and 40-55.
  5. What inferences might we draw from these observations?
  3. Compile from this section some principles regarding the nature of true hope
- 19. Isaiah Final Synthesis (8 Hours)** DUE: May 16, 1:00 –3:00 PM
- Please use your time so as to give attention to each of the following:
1. Synthesize your study of Isaiah by doing *one* of the following:
    - a. Produce a *synthetic master chart* of the book coordinating as much of its structure and movement as possible. Polish this project as a presentation-quality product.
    - b. Develop a *thematic/theological analysis* of the book as a whole in which interpretive conclusions are coordinated, possibly in chart-form.

- c. Select a *major* law of structure controlling the book as a whole and answer the survey questions about that law as *fully as possible* within the time limits.
  - d. Select a strategic area in the book and interpret it as fully as possible in the context of the book as a whole
3. In your synthesis, give attention to the perennial questions addressed in the interpretation of Isaiah:
  - a. How do you coordinate the various *settings of the book* with the continuity the prophet's identity?
  - b. What vision does the prophet cast of the identity, role, and destiny of Zion/Jerusalem as the embodiment of the people and purpose of God?
  - c. How are the political and theological, the social-ethical and personal-pietistic, dimensions of faith portrayed in the book?
  - d. How does the book portray and relate the immediate and historical events and the ultimate purposes and judgment of God?
3. What can the book of Isaiah say to the church of our day?