

1-1-1990

Biblical Resources for Preaching

Rick Marrs
rick.marrs@pepperdine.edu

Wendell Willis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marrs, Rick and Willis, Wendell (1990) "Biblical Resources for Preaching," *Leaven*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 19. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol1/iss1/19>

This Resource Guide is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.

Biblical Resources for Preaching



An Annotated Bibliography for the Book of Isaiah By Rick Marrs

The following bibliography for the book of the prophet Isaiah is extremely selective. The secondary literature on Isaiah is voluminous. The works listed have been chosen primarily (although not exclusively) for their value for ministers as they prepare classes and sermons.

Another word is in order. As is well known, there has been a long standing discussion concerning the unity of the book of Isaiah. No position concerning that issue is taken in this bibliography. However, the organization of the bibliography reflects an awareness that much of the literature on the book of Isaiah treats primarily or solely smaller sections of the book.

ISAIAH 1-39

Blank, S. Prophetic Faith in Isaiah (NY: Harper and Row, 1958).

An older work by a noted Jewish scholar. Blank confidently distinguishes material in Isaiah deriving from the "Isaiah of history" and the "Isaiah of legend." Not surprisingly, doom oracles belong to the Isaiah of history, while hope and Zion oracles belong to the Isaiah of legend. Blank supposes the "legendary Isaiah material" to have arisen following the "erroneous" prediction of disaster by the Isaiah of history concerning Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Though Blank is overly rationalistic and rigid,

one can still find helpful insights concerning the value and meaning of faith.

Clements, R. Isaiah 1-39 (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

A recent commentary in the New Century Bible series (a series based primarily upon the RSV text). Clements has written extensively on Isaiah; his commentary represents an indebtedness to the redactional analysis of Isaiah by the German scholar Hermann Barth. (Barth envisions an extensive editing of the book of Isaiah during the time of Josiah.) Clements rejects any idea of a pre-Isaiah Zion tradition. He regards the account of Jerusalem's deliverance under Hezekiah as a late and unhistorical theological fabrication. Clements work is helpful

in seeing how redaction criticism elucidates and interprets the text. However, much of his editorial theorizing is highly questionable; this commentary must be used judiciously.

Hayes, John H.; Stuart A. Irvine. Isaiah (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987).

A recent work by a noted OT scholar at Emory University (Hayes) and a former student. Counter to the dominant trend in Isaiah studies, Hayes and Irvine argue that the bulk of the oracles in chapters 1-39 are from Isaiah of the eighth century and that chapters 1-27 are basically in chronological order. The focus is decidedly toward the determination of specific oracle units, and defining their historical and social contexts. Though one may quarrel with the basic premise of the book, and with specifics along the way, the work is clearly written and highly recommended for the minister and informed layperson.

Holladay, W. Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

A thought provoking and stimulating work. While not a commentary, Holladay treats most of the book of Isaiah (1-66). A primary interest is determining the development and growth of the book of Isaiah. As the title indicates, Holladay is interested in the community of prophets who preserved the words of Isaiah of Jerusalem and also contributed further authentic expressions to that message (hence "scroll"). From this context he sets forth the theological and religious message of the book. This work was written for informed laypersons; however, its presuppositions would make it quite heavy reading for many from the Restoration heritage. Conversely, for the minister a careful reading of this work will pay rich dividends.

Jensen, J. Isaiah 1-39 (OTM; Wilmington: Glazier, 1984).

A popular commentary in the Old Testament Message series. This series is intended for laypeople; consequently the treatment is rather brief and simply stated. However, Jensen is conversant with the best in contemporary Isaiah scholarship and makes that available in a readable format. Jensen regards Isaiah as schooled in the Jerusalem court school and thus

indebted to the wisdom movement and its concerns.

Kaiser, O. Isaiah 1-12 (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972).

A standard work for anyone engaged in serious study of Isaiah. The Old Testament Library commentary series is intended to be primarily theological in its orientation; however, one can rightly question how much this volume has to offer the minister in sermon and class preparation.

_____. Isaiah 13-39 (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974).

A continuation of the above. Kaiser envisions extensive redaction in chapters 13-39.

Mays, J. L.; P. J. Achtemeier. Interpreting the Prophets (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

This work is a collection of articles and essays on the prophetic literature in general and specific prophets in particular previously published in the journal **Interpretation**. A section of the articles deals with Isaiah. Several of the articles are quite helpful for theological and hermeneutical study of the book of Isaiah.

Ridderbos, J. Isaiah (Bible Student's Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.).

A recent commentary by a conservative Dutch scholar intending to reflect "conservative, continental Reformed scholarship." Ridderbos defends Isaianic authorship for most of the book; however, his defence is largely on dogmatic (rather than exegetical) grounds. The exposition presupposes no knowledge of Hebrew or Greek nor familiarity with critical issues.

Sawyer, J. F. A. Isaiah (2 volumes; Daily Study Bible; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985/6).

These two volumes represent part of an attempt to offer an OT analogue to W. Barclay's Daily Study Bible series on NT books. Sawyer ably expounds the text of Isaiah in a clear and thorough manner. Especially useful is his reading of each text in its larger context of the

whole book, and the extensive inner biblical cross references. Conversely, contemporary applications are less pronounced and stimulating than one might at first expect.

Schmitt, J. J. Isaiah and His Interpreters (NY: Paulist, 1986).

A brief study providing an overview of recent study and analysis of the book of Isaiah. This lightweight volume combines simple exposition with helpful notes concerning recent scholarship. It is most useful for one entering Isaiah studies.

Scott, R. B. Y. "Introduction and Exegesis to Isaiah 1-39," The Interpreter's Bible (V; Nashville: Abingdon, 1956).

Scott's analysis, though dated, is thorough and sensible. This is one of the better expositions in the Interpreter's Bible series.

Seitz, C. R. (ed.). Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

A collection of lectures by noted scholar-homileticians (E. Achtemeier; J. Mays; R. Wilson; W. Brueggemann; P. Hanson) delivered at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1986. The lectures attempt to bring current scholarship on the book of Isaiah into dialogue with the use of Isaiah in the pulpit. The essays are of high quality, making this a valuable resource for ministers.

Ward, J. Amos and Isaiah (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969).

This work is a well written and lucid presentation of the theological, ethical, and religious message of the prophet Isaiah, presented from a "theology of the Word." Amos and Isaiah as "prophets of the Word" is Ward's underlying theme. E.g., Jerusalem is understood as significant not simply as the city of the king or the cult, but as the city from which the prophetic word goes forth. Ward attempts to present the contemporary relevance of the message of Isaiah.

Watts, J. D. W. Isaiah 1-33 (WBC 24; Waco: Word, 1985).

This is volume one of a two volume com-

mentary in the Word Bible Commentary series (Watts is also the OT editor for the series). This work is idiosyncratic (note that volume 1 covers chapters 1-33 rather than chapters 1-39) in that Watts reads the book of Isaiah as a Vision / Drama consisting of 12 major acts. This dramatic presentation, consisting of acts or "visions," is then further divided into scenes and subscenes. Rather than trace the message of Isaiah in its historical particularity, Watts views the book in its final form (which he dates c. 435 B.C.), regarding it first and foremost as a literary phenomenon intended for a literate audience. This great vision is divided into two major parts: Pt. I (chs. 1-39) - The Former Times (Judgment and Curse); Pt. II (chs. 40-66) - The Latter Times (Salvation and Blessing). Although containing a wealth of information and bibliographical data, Watts's own contribution is disappointing.

Willis, J. Isaiah (LWC-OT; Austin: Sweet, 1980).

A solid work by a noted scholar at Abilene Christian University. The work of Willis is well written and extremely valuable for anyone working within the Restoration tradition.

Isaiah 40-66

Brueggemann, W. Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

In this little monograph Brueggemann treats the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah. He reads these works from two perspectives: biblical theology (i.e., hearing the claims of the text on the original hearers); hermeneutics (i.e., hearing the claims of the text on its contemporary listeners). He attempts to draw a "dynamic equivalence" between Israel's exilic situation and the American church. Brueggemann's headings are suggestive: Jeremiah - "Only grief permits newness;" Ezekiel - "Only holiness gives hope;" Second Isaiah - "Only memory allows possibility." These chapters are a distillation of lectures Brueggemann delivered in various church and seminary settings, making it quite useful for ministers.

Clifford, R. Fair-Spoken and Persuad-

ing (NY: Paulist, 1984).

An excellent analysis of Isaiah 40-55 from a rhetorical and theological perspective. Clifford attempts to show that the prophet was a skilled orator who used his rhetorical gifts to persuade people to return to Yahweh. The prophet calls the exiles to a new reality of the Exodus- Conquest motif and a new cosmogony. Clifford envisions five polarities in the prophet's preaching: First and Last Things; Babylon and Zion; Yahweh and the gods; Israel and the nations; Servant and People. This work is quite useful for ministers and informed laypersons.

Gitay, Y. Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48 (Bonn: *Linguistica Biblica* 1981).

An interesting work analyzing the rhetorical nature and quality of Isaiah through the lens of Greco-Roman oratorical features (he especially concentrates on the oratorical phenomena of types of arguments [e.g., rational, emotional, ethical], of organization and arrangement [i.e., the elements of introduction, statement of facts, division, proof, refutation, conclusion], and of expression or style. The work is somewhat helpful for thinking of the role, relationship, and function of rhetoric in ancient prophetic preaching, although some attention to oratorical phenomena in the Semitic world would be helpful. Analyzing these prophetic materials from an oratorical context rather than a literary (i.e., form critical) context often results in fresh insights.

Hanson, P. The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

In this work Hanson primarily attempts to trace the rise and development of apocalyptic in ancient Israel. In so doing he provides an extensive exegetical analysis of Isaiah 56-66. Hanson considers apocalyptic to derive primarily from prophecy (he labels Isaiah 40-55 proto-apocalyptic; Isaiah 56-66 and Zechariah 9-13 early apocalyptic; Zechariah 14 middle apocalyptic). Perhaps most intriguing (and controversial) is Hanson's sociological analysis of the post-exilic period. He envisions in post-exilic Israel a power struggle between hierocratic (priestly) and visionary (apocalyptic) circles. His analysis, though often rather speculative and overly nuanced, is often filled with provocative possibilities.

Knight, G. A. F. Isaiah 40-55: Servant Theology (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

An attempt to provide theological and hermeneutical insights into the message of Isaiah 40-55 for the church. Knight envisions the message of Isaiah 40-55 as a "sustained theological treatise in verse." In this work Knight presumably develops arguments begun in his earlier work (see above); however, there is less revision than one might expect (giving this later work a certain "dated" feeling). He states that the main theme of Isaiah 40-55 is "the revelation DI [Deutero-Isaiah] makes of the nature and purpose of God in His immanence in Israel as the Servant of the Universe."

Knight, G. A. F. Isaiah 56-66 (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

Of a similar genre and style to the above work, Knight argues that TI [Trito-Isaiah] was a prophet during the return to Jerusalem c. 538-36 B.C. He was a leader of a group in constant conflict with the Zadokite priests. Whereas the Zadokites were exclusivistic, TI saw the covenant as open to all (universal). Although helpful in its theological orientation, Knight is often quite speculative and limiting in his reading of the materials.

Melugin, R. The Formation of Isaiah 40-55 (BZAW #141; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976).

A solid form critical analysis of Isaiah 40-55. Melugin's work falls under two major categories: the nature of poetry in Isaiah 40-55 (i.e., an analysis of genre research); the nature of the literary arrangement of these chapters (i.e., an analysis of the arrangement of these genre units). Melugin finds four principle genres in Isaiah 40-55: salvation speeches; disputation speeches; trial speeches; servant songs (for him, this last genre is the prophet's own creation). Presupposing a familiarity with OT studies, this book is filled with valuable insights into the various oracles in these chapters; however, determining the contemporary message must be done by the reader.

Muilenburg, J. "Introduction and Exegesis to Isaiah 40-66," The

Interpreter's Bible (V; Nashville: Abingdon, 1956).

Muilenburg's introduction to and analysis of the rhetorical features of these chapters is excellent; his theological analysis is less satisfying.

Scullion, J. Isaiah 40-66 (OTM; Wilmington: Glazier, 1982).

A popular treatment of the latter half of Isaiah, intended for the preacher and serious student. (See above, Jensen, Isaiah 1-39). Although lightweight, Scullion synthesizes and articulates scholarly positions and offers fresh insights. Helpful is his use of ancient Near Eastern materials. This little volume is useful for preachers in sermon and class preparation.

Smart, J. History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35,40-66 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965).

An older work by a noted theologian and homiletician. Smart's work is always quite thought provoking and useful for the minister and teacher.

Watts, J. D. W. Isaiah 34-66 (WBC 25; Waco: Word, 1987).

See above, Watts, Isaiah 1-33.

Westermann, C. Isaiah 40-66 (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969).

Westermann is a premier form critical scholar. This volume in the Old Testament Library series contains a wealth of informative

analysis of literary types and how these types enhance our understanding of the message. Westermann helpfully notes a major problem inherent in studies concerning the Suffering Servant: while contemporary readers are most interested in determining the servant's identity, the prophet is most interested in depicting the servant's function. This commentary contains much information and material for preaching and teaching, although the almost exclusive concentration on form critical analysis is at times short sighted.

Whybray, R. Isaiah 40-66 (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

Part of the New Century Bible series, the analysis is solid and lucid in presentation. Whybray takes a mainstream position that these chapters come from a nameless exilic prophet in Babylon and his later disciples in Palestine. His analysis concentrates on the textual and exegetical significance of the various pericopes. He identifies the suffering servant with the prophet himself (Deutero-Isaiah), who describes his treatment by his Jewish contemporaries and local Babylonian authorities. Isaiah 53 describes release from a Babylonian prison (see Whybray's monograph, Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet [JSOTS 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978).

Whybray, R. The Second Isaiah (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

This series is intended as an introductory guide for college/ seminary level students, making available the contents, theological perspectives, and recent scholarship on the various biblical books. The work is lucid, up to date, and quite helpful for its intended audience.