

Die Jesajaerzählungen Jesaja 36-39
J. Meinhold
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The historico-critical investigation of these chapters in the Book of Isaiah and of the corresponding sections in 2 Kings is of great importance for determining the course of Isaiah's prophetic activity and the content of his message during the Sennacherib campaign of the year 701 B.C. Hence the author offers his study as an introduction to a series of studies which are to deal with the life and work of that great prophet. The conclusions reached are briefly the following: What is related in chapters 38 and 39 concerning the sickness of Hezekiah and the embassy of Merodach-Baladan dates (with the exception of the Psalm) from the exilic period, and is consequently unreliable from a historical point of view. As regards the preceding account of the Sennacherib campaign Meinhold adopts the view at present in vogue among the critics, which finds in the Isaiah text two versions, in the text of Kings three versions, of the same event from different hands. Of the two versions in Isaiah the one in chapter 36:2-37:9a, 37, 38, contains at least some reminiscences of the actual course of events, although even it is full of unhistorical representations. The other account, consisting of chapter 37:9b-36, is much farther removed from the true basis of facts. Both are exilic. (Chapter 37:22-29, represents a still later addition from the close of the exile.) And both must give way to the third version, which has been preserved only in the parallel text of Kings, chapter 18:13b-16, and has not found its way into the Book of Isaiah. The author refuses to treat the three sections in 2 Kings as describing successive developments of the campaign. It is true, he admits, that the better of the two Isaiah versions contains some data founded on fact and relating to the stage of the campaign subsequent to Hezekiah's payment of tribute. The Deuteronomic redactor intended to have his readers interpret the whole on the principle of chronological sequence, but the original writer of Isaiah 36:2-37:9a, 37, 38, did not intend to give a supplement to 2 Kings, 18:13b-16. He offers his version as a complete narrative, and knows nothing of Hezekiah's tribute and subjection.

Meinhold rejects the hypothesis of Winkler, which proposes to distribute the two accounts in Isaiah over two campaigns of Sennacherib; the one in 701, the other much later in 681.

We do not believe that anything has been adduced by the present author or his predecessors in the field which would render the critical dissection of the text as it stands in Isaiah and Kings necessary. The view that all the events described took place in succession has not been shown to be impossible. So far as we can judge the Assyrian inscriptions do not overthrow it, unless a character of absolute infallibility be reserved for them to the prejudice of the Biblical account. Some of the author's arguments rest on the preconception that Isaiah could not have played the role of wonder-worker and soothsayer, which the two longer versions ascribe to him. But this is a mere postulate of the modern interpretation of his character, and of that of early prophecy in general. On the other hand, it should be noticed that in one important point at least Meinhold takes issue with Duhm, Hackmann, Cheyne and other representatives of "advanced Isaiah criticism." He holds to the belief that the prophet predicted the deliverance of Jerusalem in the year 701, and that the sections containing this prophecy of salvation in Isaiah 28-31 are genuine.