

of the people of Judah made it necessary for Isaiah and the true people of God to be more and more limited to secret meetings and private discussions, God enabled the prophet to give wonderful messages of hope to those who were standing true and these same messages would bring God's consolation to the people later on, after they had actually gone into exile.

### **Exile to Babylon**

One other fact of importance must be noticed. We saw that chapter 39 ended with the prediction that the people of Judah would go into bondage, not to the great power of Assyria but to the distant city of Babylon. We saw how impossible it must have seemed to the people of Isaiah's day that this city, which itself was then subject to Assyria, would become independent and grow strong enough to take the people of Judah into captivity. This was a wonderful element of specific prediction which God gave through Isaiah to the people. In the arrangement of the historical section, chapters 36 to 39, this prediction is placed at the end of the section, although chronologically its utterance probably was earlier than some of the other events described in this passage. It is placed at the end in order to form an introduction to the words of consolation which follow as Isaiah assures the true people of God that the exile is not the end but that God is still with His people and that there is a marvelous future still ahead for them. So we must say that while the historical background of Isaiah 40 to 52 is that of people already in exile, with their city destroyed and the temple in ruins people longing for deliverance and tending to despair of God -- there is no reason why the passage might not have been written by Isaiah himself almost a century before the exile even commenced. That is what the Christian Church and the Jews have believed, all through the ages, about this part of the book of Isaiah.

### **The Unity of Isaiah 40-66**

We have noticed that the book of Isaiah is divided into two large sections of prophecy which are separated by a historical section made up of chapters 36 to 39. The first of these main