

## Allan MacRae, Isaiah 40-56, Lecture 7

This is lecture 7 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 40-56:

We've noticed that chapter 40 is an introduction giving simply the emotions or the themes, that are common in the next few chapters. I am going to have to move a little faster than we've been going because we have considerable amount of ground to cover. There are sections we finished last time that contain a bit of repetition and that deal principally with the exile. Of course, we are interested in that toward which our discussion leads which comes in the later sections.

I've thought of chapters 40-47 as forming a section that I've called "Babylon overthrown" and the "Lord's servant introduced" because in this section we find a definite emphasis on the fact that the Babylonians, who had conquered the Israelites, were to lose their hold on them and, in fact, were to lose their hold on any part of the world. That has gradually been developed and stressed during this section, and the idea of the Lord's servant has been introduced a number of times; but the only lengthy discussion of it we had was in chapter 42. In this section we have very little of review. I would think that in the whole section from chapter 40 on up to 56 that there is less rebuke than in almost any other section of the prophetic books of equal length. It is addressed to people-- not who are looked upon as sinners who need to be rebuked for their sin--but as people who are in suffering and in misery, and God is comforting them. The central thought here is comfort and God's promises.

But there is brought along into it, little by little, very gently as a rule, the stress on the idea. Why are you in this situation? Because of your sin. Why has the exile come? Because of your sin. That is gradually brought into prominence, not with the idea of direct rebuke as in most of the prophetic books and in most of the book of Isaiah, but with the thought of bringing them to the realization that God is going to bring them out of the exile. He is going to deliver them, but there is something more fundamental than that. It's their attitude toward the Lord that produced the exile and which, if not remedied,

would produce another exile. Deliverance from exile by itself will accomplish nothing. That is gradually brought out, through these chapters.

Now, we found in chapter 42 that great picture of the work of the servant of the Lord who is going to bring justice to all the world and, of course, that includes putting an end to all oppression and bringing universal justice. But he is going to be a light to the Gentiles; he's going to produce a great change in the whole world, a change that Israel has the responsibility of producing, but which the whole nation can't produce. It must be a part of the nation, in any event, and as you read chapter 42 it sounds very much like it is one individual. That is not specificity stated yet, but it is very strongly a stress in chapter 42.

Now, through this section we have many references to the coming of Cyrus as the one who was going to deliver. I just want to look at those references of Cyrus together now so that you can get an idea of the extent of them in this section and the beginning of the next section, but no more after that. It starts in chapter 41, where you remember in verses 2-3 God declared that he was behind Cyrus: "Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him, and subdues kings before him; he turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow. He pursues them and moves on unscathed by a path his feet have not traveled before." Some commentators have said this is Abraham. Well, from the words alone, you couldn't know who it is for sure, but a mention of Abraham this way goes way beyond anything in the life of Abraham. There was one case in which he did a great military exploit, but that's the only one we have recorded in his life and it doesn't fit the context here, where we find people being filled with fear as they see Cyrus coming. Chapter 41, verse 25, reiterates the same theme a little more specifically: "I have stirred up one from the north and he comes, one from the rising sun who calls on my name; he treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay." Then in chapter 43, verse 3, we have: "For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead." I believe all commentators agree that this is a reference to the fact that after Cyrus conquered Babylon he went on to conquer Cush

and Seba farther to the south. God is saying to Israel that Cyrus is letting you go home, but he's going on to get other things that I am giving to him in your place. That is not very clear in the context, but I believe that all commentators agree that is what it means; I have never heard any other suggestion for it.

Chapter 44 reaches its high point in verse 28 where Isaiah has this long poem at the end telling what the Lord has done: how he foils signs of false prophets and makes fools of the diviners, and so on. It says of him in verse 26, the last half: "I am the one," he says, "who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judea, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them'; who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry,' and I will dry up your streams, who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please.'" There is a definite reference to the name of Cyrus 150 years before his time. We have the reference to Cyrus clear both in verse 26 and in 28.

Now what does the "watery deep" mean? I believe that all commentators-- certainly most agree--that here "the watery deep" is a reference to the land of the two rivers, Mesopotamia, the region which had been the center that conquering armies had gone out to the east and to the north and to the west in the preceding fifteen hundred years. This area, which had been the center of conquering armies, is going to be dried up, and the fact is, that after Cyrus had conquered Mesopotamia, we had no further important effort from that particular region to conquer other countries until within this last year, when the forces of that region, of Iraq, had started out to try and conquer Iran [MacRae is referring to the 1980's]. That, of course, is very small in comparison with what armies from that section did before. So if that is taken that way this term "the watery deep and I will dry up your streams" is figurative language.

There are those who say they take everything in the Bible literally. Of course, that's nonsense. You can't take everything in any book literally. We take it all to mean what it says in the light of context. We try the literal meaning first to see if it fits in the context, but we find that in the Bible, as in all literature, there are figures of speech. I believe that most commentators consider verse 27 here, in the light of the context, as a figurative statement. The NIV says, "Who says to the watery deep, "Be dry," and I will

dry up your streams.” And Mesopotamia was always called the land of the two rivers, a land that would be desert if it were not for these rivers, these great rivers that come down from the mountains and bring fertility and water. It is used to refer to the land that is made fertile by the two rivers.

Well, the main thing I’m trying to bring out is how God predicted that Cyrus would come and predicted him by name; and if we take verse 27 in a figurative way Isaiah predicts here the end of the Mesopotamian power, which had partly been ruled by Assyria, partly by Babylon, and which are both in that region, had been the great center of empire for maybe 1500 years before this, and which was never again. It was conquered by the Persians, later on by the Mohammadans, and Iraq has been a comparatively insignificant country until comparatively recently. Probably still would be if it weren’t for the Russian arms and the Russian backing, which they are giving to them and to Iran, probably so that they can weaken each other and Russia can take hold of both of them when the time is right. We don’t know of course. That’s not predicted specifically in the Scripture here.

But this is the great passage about Cyrus beginning here with verse 26 and going on through the rest of the chapter. “Who says of Cyrus he is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please. He will say of Jerusalem, ‘Let it be rebuilt,’ and of the temple, ‘Let its foundations be laid.’” Now, in Daniel there is a prediction of a 70 week period divided into three parts and it speaks of the first part as reaching "From the going forth of the word to rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah, the Prince." Messiah simply is “the anointed one,” the prince. Here he speaks of Cyrus as rebuilding Jerusalem. But the number of weeks there, if they’re taken as years, would be much too long to go from Cyrus to Christ, and so there are many who say it starts with a later Persian king named Artaxerxes. But Isaiah said it is Cyrus who is going to give the word to rebuild Jerusalem. It was a hundred or so years later that Artaxerxes permitted Nehemiah to go back and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. But here is the real command to rebuild Jerusalem by Cyrus.

Chapter 45 goes right straight on. One questions whether there should be a new

chapter division there. As you know, the chapter divisions are not original. In this section they are very well placed, on the whole. But not all of them. They are not original and they are not to be taken as necessarily showing divisions in the thought. So this goes right on. "This is what the Lord says to his anointed," "to messiah." And that's the very word that the King James translates "Messiah" in Daniel. "To his messiah. To Cyrus." So Cyrus is called "messiah." "Messiah" simply means "an anointed one." Of course, Jesus Christ is the greatest anointed one. It is a term, though, that is used many times of Israelite kings and this one time of a Persian king whom God had designated for a certain purpose. "To Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip doors of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut."

We have this great prediction about Cyrus here in chapters 44-45, then in chapter 46, verse 11, we read "The Lord says from the east I summon a bird of prey, from a far off land a man to fulfill my purpose." The word "a bird of prey" is very clearly a figurative expression there. He is certainly not a real bird that is spoken of here. But he is speaking of someone who can be compared to a bird of prey. "From the east I summon a bird of prey. From a far off land a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about. What I have planned, that will I do." This Cyrus came from the east and freed the Israelites from Babylonian captivity.

There's one more reference to Cyrus in chapter 48, verses 14-15. There we read, "Come together all of you and listen. Which of the idols has foretold these things?" You see again there the argument from prediction. There's not much sign of God's power at this time. It's easy for people to say, "Well, what power does the God of Israel have? We see no evidence of it." But he says, "Look at the creation I've made. There's evidence of my power." Well, they may say, "How do we know God's the one who created the universe?" But he goes on to say, "Which of the idols has foretold this? The Lord's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon. His arm will be against the Babylonians." That is the last reference to Cyrus. We had the long series of them. But here it ends. With the long series it is easy to see that they must have belonged together.

This was in this first section, which really ends at chapter 47. Chapter 48 is sort of a transition chapter in which there are some fairly strong passages of rebuke, but they're quite short. They're always followed immediately by a strong passage of blessing. It's as if Isaiah was speaking to people whose hearts are so full that he has to deal very gently with them, only occasionally speaking out briefly with a strong passages of rebuke, and then passing over quickly to blessing. Right between the rebuke and the blessing there has been a chapter division placed in two or three cases.

Chapter 46 is where the first part is devoted to the downfall of the gods of Babylon. The Babylonian background in this section is very clear. Chapter 47 starts, "Go down, sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground without a throne, daughter of the Babylonians. No more will you be called tender or delicate." Here we have Babylon pictured as a woman, formerly a queen, now reduced to very dire circumstances. Verse five, "Sit in silence; go into darkness, daughter of the Babylonians. No more will you be called queen of the kingdoms," and the whole chapter is devoted to describing the downfall of Babylon.

So I think we have a major division in the book at the end of chapter 47. Although in chapter 48 is sort of a transition chapter, in chapter 48 we have the first really direct rebuke of Israel. We have brief passages of rebuke before, which are given generally more with a tone of, "Why don't you recognize all that I've done for you and all that I'm doing?" Just an occasional strong word. But the beginning of 48 is very interesting. Chapter 48:1, "Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel but not in truth or righteousness." Now, there's no verse like that earlier in this section of Isaiah at all. You notice how he's speaking; he sounds as if he's praising: they're his people; they're people who take hold of his name and invoke him. But then the last line turns, "But not in truth or righteousness." It is perhaps the strongest rebuke yet in the book. Chapter 48 verse 2 and following: "You who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel, the Lord Almighty is his name. I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them, and I made them known.

Then suddenly I acted and they came to pass, for I knew how stubborn you were. The sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things long ago. Before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them.' ”

All the sections before this were about idolatry, and there have been quite a number, that had the general idea of, 'Look how foolish those heathen are that are worshipping idols,' and so the folly of idolatry. And now these are God's people, not like those people that worship idols. But here he directly criticizes them for falling into idol worship. We don't know how many of them did. We know this was always a tendency on the part of some of the Israelites. All through their history, some before the exile would fall into idol worship. But after the exile, Israel became known for its complete turning away from idolatry. Israel has been known since that time for its strong emphasis on monotheism. But here we see a rebuke to those Israelites who were falling away into idolatry, for the first time in this section of Isaiah.

He says in chapter 48, verse 4 and following, "I knew how stubborn you were: the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things; long ago before they happened I announced them to you." Again that stress on prediction is not on telling us what is going to happen, but on the prediction as evidence of God's knowledge of the future. You may not see evidences of his power in the affairs of nations. But you can see evidences of his prediction. That is a great argument for belief in God's existence, and naturally his power. In verse 5 he says, "Before they happen I announce them to you, so that you could not say, 'My idols did them, my wooden image and metal god ordained them.'" There's the direct criticism of individuals who were turning to idolatry. Not simply the criticism of the heathen who worship idols, but of Israelites who were falling into idolatry. "I am predicting this in advance so that they can't say, 'My idol did it'."

I picked up a copy of "Liberty Magazine" in 1939 in January, and in that magazine they had an article telling about a great astrologer whom they said was able to predict the future, and leaders in business, in government, and in the movie world were constantly

going to him to know what was going to happen in the future to them, and what they should do. So “Liberty Magazine” had asked him in January of 1939 to tell us what was going to happen this year. And so he gave a dozen specific predictions. A year later I came across the magazine. When the year had passed, it was interesting to hear what this man predicted for that year. He said, “No great war will start this year.” But that’s the year that World War II started. He said, “Hitler will be assassinated during this year,” but Hitler lived six years after that. He said, “During this year Roosevelt will announce that he will not run for a third year.” But he did run for a third term. It was interesting to find a dozen predictions he made of which practically all of them were exactly opposite of what happened. But how many people knew or remembered at the end what he had said before? It is very, very difficult to predict the future, because events turn out in ways that you would never expect. Here God says, “I’ve told you these things in advance so that you could not say, ‘My idols did them’.”

Now, in verse 7 and following he goes on, “I’ll tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. You were created now and not long ago, you have never heard of them before today so you cannot say, ‘Yes I knew of them.’ You have never heard nor understood, for behold, your ear has not been opened. I know how treacherous you are. You were called a rebel from birth.” That is very different from anything we’ve found earlier than this section of Isaiah. It is very strong criticism, but then he quickly goes back to promises of blessing.

Chapter 48, verse 9, “For my own name’s sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake I will do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.” Then he stresses his power again and then again the argument from prediction. In verse 14, “Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols have foretold these things? The Lord’s chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him.” Then in verse 20 he says, “Leave Babylon; flee from the Babylonians!” Well, they couldn’t do that as long as

Babylon was supreme. But it is saying when he gives a command like this, he will give the power to fulfill the command and he is promising the power will soon come.

Verse 20 continues, “Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, ‘The Lord has redeemed his servant, Jacob.’ They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and water gushed out. ‘There is no peace,’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked.’”

Here there is a definite break and a definite paragraph, for in chapter 49 we have somebody else speaking. It doesn’t sound like the prophet speaking at the beginning of chapter 49: “Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he made mention of my name.” When did he ever do that about Isaiah? Not that we know of. “He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, and in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. He said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.’” He says, “‘You are my servant, Israel.’”

Well now, who is speaking here? Is this the whole nation of Israel speaking? After the great rebuke that he has just given to them in chapter 48, can you imagine Israel speaking quite this way? “He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. He said, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.’” Is this Israel speaking? Is this perhaps the godly in Israel? It certainly is not the whole nation. Is it perhaps the godly? Could it perhaps even be one who comes from Israel who represents Israel? Is an Israelite and yet is only one Israelite rather than a large part of the nation.

Well, we go on to verse 4 of chapter 49, “But I said, ‘I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord’s hand, and my reward is with my God.’” There is one speaking in seeming frustration. One to whom the Lord has said, “You are my servant, Israel.” Well, here he speaks in frustration, in anguish. We might think of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. As he speaks in anguish, “I have spent my strength and for nothing, yet what is due me is in the Lord’s hands, and my reward is with my God.” But now in verse 5 we read a most

startling statement. “And now the Lord says – he who formed me in the womb to be his servant.” That’s an unusual expression. Is that a suggestion of the virgin birth? We would not say that it is a clear, direct prediction of it, certainly. But it certainly may be a suggestion of it. “...he who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to him.” So, the servant is Israel; he is God’s servant, Israel, and yet he can speak of himself as separate from Israel. “To bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to him.” I have called this section, “The Lord’s Servant Individualized.” It is showing us how much of Israel is to do the work, the actual work, of the Lord’s servant. This picture we have all through this section of the servant of the Lord who is, “To bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to him. For I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and God has been my strength.”

In verse 6 he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Tremendous statement, here, of what God has said to his servant, his servant, Israel. His servant who represents Israel; his servant who is an Israelite. His servant who has a work to do for Israel. He is not only to work for Israel, he is to be a light for the Gentiles and he is to bring God’s salvation to the ends of the earth.

On to verse 7: “This is what the Lord says – the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel – to him who was despised and abhorred by the nations.” Certainly there is here divine direction in Isaiah’s writing to say this. Not only is the servant not the whole of Israel, but the servant is “abhorred and despised by the nation, to the servant of rulers.” To this one who is to be so humiliated, God says, “Kings will see you and arise; princes will see and bow down because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” Here is the servant: the one who is to be humiliated, the one who is to be despised and yet kings and princes will bow down before him. Well, it was fulfilled in the visit of the wisemen at Jesus’ birth, but it was fulfilled further as the word about this man from Galilee spread over the world. Kings and princes have bowed down before him. It is a tremendous prediction that is made here about the Lord’s servant. His humiliation is

brought out and his exaltation is brought out: the fact that he is going to do great things for Israel and the fact that he is to be a light to the Gentiles.

So in verse 8 we read, "This is what the Lord says: 'In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant of the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances'." Has that ever been fulfilled, up to the present of that last phrase: "To say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free.'"

Certainly through the work of Christ that has been fulfilled. "They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads and my highways will be raised up" (Isa 49:9-11). Here the people in exile, far off in Babylon, think of how the servant is going to fulfill this, and yet they have already read how Cyrus is going to liberate them. We read in chapter 40 about every mountain and hill being laid low and every valley exalted to make it easy for them to get back. But we notice that chapter 40 just touch upon the themes of the section rather than being made up of specific predictions of particular events that touches on the emotion involved in the return from exile.

So we find in chapter 49, verse 12, "They will come from afar, some from the north, some from the west." Well, if the Israelites were in exile in the east, they had been taken far over into Babylon. We do not know at this time of any Israelite having been taken into captivity to the west. But here we read, "Some from the north and some from the west." These are not the directions in which they had gone in connection with the Babylonian exile. So we look forward to the work of the servant not only to the deliverance from exile in the near future, but to a work that is going to extend far off in directions to those beyond the exile. "They shall come from afar, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim" which the NIV conjectures is "Aswan."

The land Sinim is a peculiar term here, a very peculiar term. Naturally, people

wonder exactly what does that mean? There was a very interesting thing that happened. In the days of Isaiah there is some evidence of trade having been carried on clear across Asia as far as China. There is not a great deal of evidence from that period, but there is some evidence--that is to say that we find some things in archaeological excavations from this section of the Near East--which very clearly came from China. And in China, at this time there was a section of China which was furthest west in China. This is the first section you would come to as you enter China, which was called the land of Sin. Whether to pronounce it "Cha" or "Suh," is somewhere in between those. The sounds of every language differ from those of other languages. Often sounds are very difficult for people to pronounce from another land with another language. They are trained from childhood to produce sounds differently. You bring someone from Germany over to this country at a mature age, and you see them 30 years later and you can immediately recognize that they came from Germany if you are familiar with German. That's because there are sounds in German that are different from English, and it takes great effort to acquire them if you are an adult when you try to do so. And if that is true of a language as near ours as German, it is far more true of languages that are more different from English. I have not yet been able to pronounce Mr. Cho's name [a student in MacRae's class] in a way that he has felt was a correct way to pronounce it.

It says "some will come" from those directions. It does not bring out whether it is physical deliverance or whether it is some other kind of other deliverance; that is not yet clearly brought out. But it shows the work of the servant extending not only to the east, to Babylon, but extending also to the two other directions. Maybe some of the Israelites fled to Egypt at the time of the Babylonian captivity. It doesn't mention Egypt; it doesn't mention east or south as far the directions are concerned. It mentions north, and it mentions west, the two directions they have not gone during the Babylonian exile. That strongly suggests that when the work of the servant--who represents Israel and does this tremendous work for Israel--is accomplished, it will reach far beyond the directions to which the people in captivity had gone.

But I wanted to tell you something about the history that is comparably little

known but can definitely be tested to be easily proven. If somebody went in ancient times, say to the time of the Roman Empire, if you went from Europe to Asia, the first section you'd come to, was the section they called "Asia." Today we call it "Asia Minor," and we extend the name "Asia" to the whole continent, but we name it after the part nearest to us. In later times if you went from France to Germany, the first section of Germany you would come to was the section in which the tribe called the "Alemanni" lived. There were many tribes in Germany and the Franks--another German tribe--ruled what we know called France. When they would go into Germany, the first section they come to is the section of the Alemanni. To this day, in French, Germany is called Aleman, named after the section you come into first, I mean, that is a rather common thing. Now, we are not sure that in the days of Isaiah they would refer to China by the name of the part of China you would first come into if you went there across Asia from the west. But this we are sure of: that a king of that section of China conquered the rest of China. When he conquered the rest of China, the first emperor of China had been King of this section called "Sin." He conquered all of China. Since that time most people, at least in the west here, have called the land China, which is derived from this section "Sin," just like the French word for Germany is derived from "Alemanni," and just like we call the whole continent of Asia after Asia Minor. This first emperor of China built the Great Wall of China. He was very important in the history of China. But the Chinese themselves never adopted his name for the district of China; they have other names for China. And so it is the most natural interpretation of this passage that the work of the servant of the Lord is going to extend to the north, and to the west, and to the east, even as far as China.

Now, I saw a statement by a man who read my statement on this period I think he is the professor of Old Testament in what is considered quite a conservative school, and he said the world of the Old Testament did not reach as far as China, so this cannot mean China. Well certainly God's world included China, it certainly does. We know there was trade with China at that time, though the name "China" had not yet been applied to the land as a whole. And so I am quite convinced that chapter 49, verse 12, means that the work of the servant of the Lord, the one who fulfills God's promise to the full, the one

who brings salvation to the very ends of the earth, is going to extend to people who come from the north, and from the west, and some from the land of China.

Now, naturally, the modernists do not like that interpretation, and many conservatives are affected by what they say. So they say that there is north and west so the other direction must be south not east. Well I don't know why it has to be south any more than east as China would be. What they say is that it has to be south, and if you go down into Egypt, to the far south of Egypt, you find a little tiny town of no importance at the time of Isaiah, which was called "Sieni." And today there has been a big dam built at that place, and so in the New International Version they have put in a footnote for Sieni, that is "Aswan." But this place of Sieni was, at that time, a very small and insignificant town, and there was a big island, the island of Jeb, otherwise known as "Elephantine" that was very well known at that time. Now, what is true is that Ezekiel refers to the whole land of Egypt as far as Sieni, but he spells "Sieni" differently than it is spelled here in Isaiah. So the NIV says for Sieni, "that is, Aswan (See Dead Sea scrolls)." Well, whether that means that there is one Dead Sea scroll that has one extra letter to make it look like Sieni, I have to check into that specifically, but I am quite convinced that at that time Sieni would not have been used in this way. We do, however, have here a picture of the outreach of the work of the Lord, that through the servant of the Lord, is going to the north, to the west, and even as far as the land of China. This is something that looks far far beyond the return of the Babylonian exile; the north and the west could have nothing to do with this exile. It is looking forward to the redemption from sin, not simply through the deliverance from exile.

So in this section the servant of the Lord is individualized. It is made clear to us here. It is not stressed a great deal, but the Lord is gradually bringing these ideas to our attention, gradually making us more aware of them, while still giving comfort and assurance of deliverance from exile. But the destruction of Babylon is practically laid aside from this point on. From this point on we have much stress on deliverance from oppression. Some are getting away from Babylon, getting free from Babylon but what comes more into prominence is this thought: that one who is going to give deliverance

from that which is the real cause of the exile--deliverance from the problem of sin. He is going to be a light to the Gentiles; he is going to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth. People will come to him from afar, some from the north, some from the west, and some from as far away as China.

So here we have one of the two great peaks of the sections thus far. We had a great one in chapter 42; and as you notice, and we have this great one in chapter 49. We have a still greater one later on. You notice in this emphasis that there has been great stress on the exaltation on the servant; there has been little stress on his humiliation. He used to be one who was despised, not only by other countries and foreigners, but by the nation Israel, as well. Another thing he is showing is that the "servant" is part of the nation and is going to suffer humiliation, but he is going to receive great glory and actually going to be a light to the Gentiles.

Now I would like you for next Friday to just glance ahead. I would like you to glance ahead to the beginning of chapter 53. I think you can read that in much less than a half an hour. It is not a long section. But I want you to glance at it simply with this in mind: Where are the main divisions of thought? We notice that at the beginning of chapter 49 is a definite division of thought. We have a new person talking. We have God's message there that ends for the time being. He speaks through the servant who describes what he is to do. But now we have various subjects touched upon, and I would just like you to say regarding the chapters 50, 51 and 52: are these best places to put chapter divisions? Do you think there are other places that are more important as division in chapters?

We will just pick up there next time.

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