

## **Allan MacRae, Isaiah 40-56, Lecture 8**

This is lecture 8 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 40-56:

We have been noticing in this section of Isaiah the development of various themes as they gradually are developed. We saw the beginning of the idea of the servant of the Lord in chapter 41. We saw that it was a responsibility that Israel had. Then in chapter 42 we had that tremendous statement of how the servant would be a light to the Gentiles and would bring justice to the distant lands. It did not make clear in chapter 42 whether the servant was all of Israel, which would be hard to believe; whether it was a large part of Israel, or whether, perhaps, it could be one individual out of Israel who represented Israel and performed the work for which Israel was responsible.

Last time we looked at chapter 49 and we saw that there we have quite definitely the individualization of the servant. We find him speaking there very specifically in the first person and speaking in a way that shows quite clearly that it is an individual who is speaking, though at times there are terms which might be thought of as applying to a larger portion of the nation. He tells us in the first two verses how the Lord has blessed him and in the third verse the Lord says, "You are my servant, Israel"; and so this one individual can be called "Israel," because he is representing Israel. But then in chapter 49, verse 4 we read: "I have labored to no purpose, I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." Does this represent the frustration of Israel, of the nation, or of the godly portion of the nation? Are they frustrated as they think of the task of the servant of the Lord to bring light to the Gentiles and to bring justice to all the world, and to do it without violence, but in a way that is described in that chapter? Does that nation feel frustrated at its inability to fulfill its mission or is it rather looking forward to the individual?

Jesus went about in the land of Israel preaching and great crowds gathering when they saw his miracles, but many of them drifted away when they began to see what he required and how great were his requirements of absolute obedience and absolute

devotion to the cause that he represented. In Isaiah 49:4 it says, "I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." You remember how Jesus said to the disciples "Will you also go away?" when so many were leaving him. Does it represent the natural feeling of frustration that one might have in that situation?

But in the end of the verse he says, "Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God." I would say that some of the servant verses referred to the nation as a whole, but that would not include every individual in the nation because there certainly were very wicked people in the nation. It includes the nation because the responsibility of the nation is to fulfill the task, but when it comes to the fulfillment of the responsibility we know it couldn't be the whole nation, or the godly among the people who were following Isaiah and were the ones to whom he is particularly speaking from chapter 40 on. He is speaking to them. They know the exile is certain. They, being part of the nation, are implicated in sin. They know the nation has not repented. They know that these things must happen, and to them he speaks particularly and shows them what the nation is guilty of. But, he also shows how God is going to be with them right to the end. And so they are gradually brought to the understanding that the servant is not the whole nation; it is not even the godly portion of the nation, but that the actual work is to be done by one individual. But this individual represents the nation and does his work on behalf of the nation.

And so here we think of Jesus, of course. The character of Jesus is one that we cannot plumb the depths of. We cannot fully understand how he was fully God and at the same time fully man. As man, he was weak; as man, he was tempted; as man, he suffered; as man, he was humiliated; as man, he died. Yet he had access to the omnipotent power; he knew of all things. Whatever he says we can depend upon. He was truly God and truly man. So we have this side of his character represented. He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin. So we find him here, finding him somewhat frustrated by the situation. You remember how he said, "O Jerusalem, how I would gladly would have gathered you like a hen does her chickens under her wings but you would not." We find him somewhat frustrated, and we see there an expression of the

heart of God who truly sorrows over man turning away from him. He sorrows over the sins and failing and short-comings of those who are saved, even though our guilt is paid for in what Christ did on the cross. Yet God enters into our sorrow, into our situations, and feels with us and for us. But we can completely trust him in whatever happens and we can know as he says, that "What is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God" (Isaiah 49:46).

In chapter 49, verse 3, he said, "And now the Lord says, he who formed me in the womb to be his servant," and you would think perhaps that is a figure of expression referring to the nation. But the very next phrase says, "To bring Jacob back to him and to gather Israel to himself." So that makes it certainly a very individual thing. When he has a responsibility not merely to be a light to the Gentiles and to establish justice throughout the world, but to bring Jacob back to him and he refers to God as "He who formed me in the womb to be his servant." Now, I would not expect that anyone in Isaiah's day would be able to see the full implication of this statement. But this is surely an implicit reference to the virgin birth of Christ. For God had "formed him in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and to gather Israel to himself. For I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has been my strength." Then he goes on and tells how God is going to use him, not merely to bring back those of Israel, but to be a light to the Gentiles and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth.

We noticed over in verse 12 how people will come from afar, some from the north and some from the west. While much of what we've seen thus far is God's bringing the Israelites back from Babylon, from the Babylonian captivity, which was to the east and to some extent to the south, here he speaks of their coming from the west and from the north, showing very definitely that he is looking way beyond the Babylonian captivity. I believe we can definitely say that here he is looking to those who will come to Christ, who will be saved through him from the most distant lands: some from the north, some from the west and some from the land of Sinim.

Now the NIV has a footnote "Sinim, that is Aswan." In that they have followed the attitude of most present scholars including, probably, a great many evangelical scholars.

But I think we should mention this fact that 100 years ago there were comparatively few modernist scholars in the United States. Most of the seminary teachers, most who claimed to believe the Bible, or at least those who taught the Bible, most of them would claim to believe in the infallibility of the Scripture, at least. They would certainly claim to believe in its great doctrines. But then the modernists got control of all the old universities in the United States. They got control of practically all of the seminaries that had been established as late as 70 or 80 years ago, practically every one. Princeton was one of the last that they got control of. As they got control of these, the evangelicals at that time, 50 years ago, were largely turning away from the field of education, and the general attitude was like the attitude toward politics today. It's all bad. The scholars have all gone off and gone to apostasy. We must just follow the simple teachings of the Bible and spread the message of the Scripture. And far better it is to take that attitude than to take the attitude of fighting over little points of interpretation and allowing yourself to be an instrument in tearing down faith to any extent. But 50 years ago there were not many of evangelical viewpoint who were interested in really going into the study of the precise evidences of the Scripture and going into the detailed points of its interpretation from a thoroughly Christian viewpoint.

Now, that situation has radically changed in these last 10 years. And we have now a considerable number of young men and middle-age men teaching in various places in the United States who desire to stand for the word of God, a considerable number of them who desire to stand for the whole teachings of the Word. But there is hardly one of them who has taken advanced training to get a doctor's degree who has not had to subject himself for a period of years of listening to unbelief presented to him. Much of that is very, very subtle. While you are definitely saying, "I'm not going to let myself be influenced by this blatant unbelief that is being given," there are a lot of incidental, subtle things coming into your mind that you don't see the evil of. The result is, that although there are far more scholars today, men whom you can really call scholars, who believe in the Bible and are trying to defend it, most of those who have taken advanced degrees have taken them under modernists and have been affected in ways they don't realize.

I helped in the making of the New International Version and came in contact with quite a number of men whom I have not known before, all of whom had doctor's degrees from some institution, and all of whom desired to be true to the Word and to follow the Word, and to accept whatever the Word truly taught. But with most of them there was an influence on them that they didn't realize from the training that they had had.

So when you come to this statement, "Some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim," the NIV committee that dealt with this, which I was not on, but if it was like particular committees I served on, there would be 7 members and by a vote of 4 out of the 7, they would decide what they would put into the NIV. My guess is, that if it was composed of the younger scholars, out of the 7 you would find 5, probably, who would think that instead of saying "the land of Sinim," which would sound as if it was a country, they would say "the region of Sinim," which they said here. I haven't come across any other place where they have translated this Hebrew word as "region." This word "eretz" is a word that has two meanings in Hebrew: it can mean the whole globe "God created the heaven and the earth," the "eretz," which means "earth." But it can also mean a particular, delimited area of the world, like the "land of Israel," the "land of Egypt," the "land of Assyria." It is used for a nation or a particular region in the sense of a unified region. That is the use of "eretz" wherever I have noticed it. Of course, words do change their meaning. But the NIV scholars used "the region of Sinim," and the reason they would do that would be because if you take the attitude that I know at least one evangelical scholar said in criticizing my book, "The world of the Old Testament did not include China." Well, the world of commerce at that date to some extent included China. We know that. Probably not to a great extent. There probably were many in Isaiah's time who knew nothing about China, but there certainly were some who did. But God's world, certainly, always included China. For God to refer to China in this connection is not at all impossible.

As I mentioned to you last time, the region you would first enter in going overland to China, in those days, was called "tsin." This is the section they would naturally first come into. God knew that the ruler of that section would eventually, at a later period,

conquer all of China, and become the first emperor of China. His dynasty did not last very long, but he did build the Great Wall of China. And he made a reputation for himself such that nations outside of China, mostly (all that I know of, all that I've ever heard about) referred to China by the name "China" which is derived from this section called "tsin." The Chinese themselves, I understand, do not use this term to apply to their land but it is a term which has come to use by the world for that great land.

The modernist scholars who, of course, could not imagine that Isaiah could possibly make a reference to China said, "Well what does this mean?" Then they noticed that in Ezekiel there are two references to a little town in the southern part of Egypt called "Sinim." Now, that is the name that occurs twice in Ezekiel, but it is not spelled exactly the way that the name is spelled in Isaiah, near enough that I would not on that ground rule out the possibility that this might be the same as Isaiah's reference. But I would say that the adding of the plural ending "im" is quite conceivably thinking of a nation. You could say the "land of China" or the "land of the Chinese" or the "land of America" or the "land of the Americans." But to take this little village and speak of the whole area, or of that region, down there as the "land of Sinim" would be quite without any parallel, as far as I know, and to put the plural ending on it like this does seem to me to be utterly without basis. Today the place is called "Aswan," which preserves the name "Sinim" and is a far more important place today than it was in Isaiah's or Ezekiel's time.

So the use of the word "region" here instead of "land" probably shows that the majority on that committee felt that this must refer to Egypt. And, of course it is true: you have the north and west named, and so it's quite natural to refer to the south, yes, but equally natural to refer to the east as China would. So the argument that it must be south simply does not hold up. I am quite convinced that it does refer to China.

I used to speak about this in my classes when China was an absolutely closed land to the gospel. On the basis of this verse I used to feel that there is yet to be a great opportunity for the preaching of the gospel in China. There are great Christian preachers in China who were imprisoned by the communists for as much as 30 years but who have been released within the last year or two. Now, the laws are still pretty strict in China

against advancing Christianity because the regime is definitely atheistic in its viewpoints, but they have relaxed them to quite an extent. They are allowing the people to hold church services in public and they say that there are a great many who through these years in which Christianity was absolutely forbidden have nevertheless maintained their Christian testimony and even spread it.

I think the verse referring to China is not so much a literal representation of the re-gathering of Jews from there, but as a representation of their coming into the kingdom of God. That's my personal belief about it. It is true that the Jews have been spread through the world to a remarkable degree, but how many have gone to China? I don't know anything about that. I know that you do find Jews in the most unexpected places, small groups of them. It is amazing how they were scattered through the world, scattered as a testimony to the truth of the scripture. Though most ancient nations have simply disappeared, God has preserved the Jews as a separate people, as a testimony to the truth of his word.

Now, this great picture of the servant of the Lord--of how he is going to restore the tribes of Jacob and also be a light to the Gentiles--it has in verse 13 this tremendous verse of praise. "Shout for joy, O heavens! Rejoice O earth! Burst into song, O mountains. For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones." I trust that most of you noticed that this is where there ought to be a chapter division. The chapter division at the beginning of 49 is certainly the correct place for a chapter division; there's no question of that. But I would say that the chapter division between chapter 49 and 50 is not half as important as the chapter division that would be placed between verses 13 and 14 of chapter 49 because we have this great picture of the servant of the Lord running through verse 13, and then we have Zion's complaints and frustration which is very specifically dealt with from there on.

But I don't want to look at that immediately. I want first to look back to chapter 48 for a minute. I rushed rather hurriedly through 48, and we noticed that up to 48 what rebuke there is, is mostly in the sense of causing the people to realize that it is their sin that is producing the exile, while once in a while breaking out into sharp rebuke, but then

immediately changing to the marvelous passages of the blessings. I thought for a time of entitling the whole section “Isaiah’s Book of Comfort” because certainly the emphasis of chapters 40 on is on comfort far more than any other section I know of in the prophetic writings. But in chapter 48, as we pointed out, starting right with that strange ending to the first verse, we have real rebuke. The Jews are not the outsiders; it does not simply show the evil of the idolatrous worship that they saw around them; it definitely accuses them of idol worship in verse 5 and says that God has given these predictions so they couldn’t say, “My idols did them.” And we looked on at this rebuke through the first part of the chapter, and we glanced at the last part from chapter 48, verse 20, with its definite reference to the exile. “Leave Babylon; flee from the Babylonians; announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it to the ends of the earth, ‘The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob.’”

And then we have the picture of how God rescued them from Egypt and is going to rescue them from Babylon, but the section in-between we did not look at, and I want to call your attention to a very interesting thing in it, which I thought better to discuss after we had looked at chapter 49, and that is chapter 48 verse 15. We read, “I, even I, have spoken.” Now, who is the “I” here who has spoken, “I, even I, have spoken.” Have you noticed many cases where Isaiah speaks of himself in the first person? In most cases where he speaks in the first person, he is quoting what the Lord is saying, and the Lord says, “I have brought Cyrus, I have predicted these things from the beginning.” It is usually the Lord who is represented by the “I.” “I, even I, have spoken, yes I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission,” speaking about Cyrus.

But in verse 16 he says, “Come near me and listen to this.” Now the NIV says, “From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens I am there,” and puts this in quotations and then leaves out of quotation marks the words “and now the Sovereign Lord has sent me with his Spirit.” I don’t quite know why they put the end of a quotation in the middle of verse 16 and have the last part separate from it. That is a judgment which someone might make, but I do not feel like there is any warrant for it.

But this is a most tremendous verse, and they have translated it in a way to give



you a little more idea of what it means than what you can get simply from the Hebrew. The King James here is quite a bit more literal. "Come thee near unto me, hear you this. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there am I, and know the Lord God and his Spirit has sent me." The Jewish publication society reads, "Come ye near unto me; hear ye this. From the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time that it was, there am I. And now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit." That's very, very similar to the King James except it puts the "has sent me" before "Spirit" rather than afterwards.

It is very similar. The modernist translations, like the Moffett translation, for example, leaves off the last phrase altogether. It puts a footnote, "And the Hebrew adds this phrase. According to Moffett, he couldn't find any sense in the statement "The sovereign Lord has sent me with his Spirit," so he just leaves that out.

But now "From the first, from the beginning, I have spoken," or "From the time that it was, I have not spoken in secret, and then at the time it happens," the NIV has "at that time," instead of "from that time." I have never seen Hebrew preposition used here, "min," translated "at" anywhere else. I don't think it's a mistranslation, but it is usually translated, "from." "From the time that it was, I am there."

Now who could say this? Could Isaiah say this? Is Isaiah now, as an old old man, saying, "From the very beginning," means the beginning of my telling of this: "I was there, I didn't speak in secret, now you see it fulfilled?" It hardly seems likely that that is what it means. It does not seem to me that the "I" is Isaiah. If the NIV puts in quotes, "From the first announcement, I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." The Hebrew simply says, "I, there." There's no "and I was there," "I am there," or "I will be there." You cannot say which verb to use exactly. What they, I think, are putting in quotes shows that they think that God spoke only the first part of the verse. Now, why would there be an insertion by Isaiah, "And now the sovereign Lord has sent me with his Spirit?" Why would he stick that little sentence in right in the middle of this, "Now the Sovereign Lord has sent me with his Spirit?" Is it Cyrus speaking? I don't think Cyrus would say God has sent him with his Spirit. We don't have anywhere else where

Cyrus speaks specifically.

But in chapter 49 we have all these long, these many verses, where the "I" means the servant. Is the servant already speaking here? Is the servant actually telling us here that he is the one who has spoken to Isaiah, who has spoken to the prophets? He has given them God's message, and from everything that has happened, from the very beginning he has been there; the servant has been there; he is God. It is God, but is he also the servant, the one who is going to represent Israel?

This last phrase is "Now the Lord Almighty [now the Lord Jehovah] has sent me, [literally] and his Spirit." See, when you have, "and his Spirit" this way, you can take it as object, or you can take it as subject. Either way is possible: "The Lord has sent me with his Spirit" as the NIV takes it, or you can take it as the King James does: "The Lord God and his Spirit has sent me." So it seems to me that a very strong argument can be made for saying that in chapter 48 verse 16, we have the servant of the Lord speaking, the one whom God will send, and that he is speaking and showing that he actually is God. "From the time it happens, I am there" means he has been from all time, he will always be, and he is always going to do his work being sent by the Lord and by the Holy Spirit, or he is being sent by the Lord and the Holy Spirit is being sent with him. So I feel you cannot *prove* the Trinity from this verse, but you have here, in the most reasonable interpretation of the words, a very definite implication of the three members of the Trinity.

So I think this is a very important verse for that reason, and I thought it good to speak of it, after we had looked at chapter 49 because if this verse stood absolutely isolated, I would hesitate about such a suggestion. I would be inclined more to say I just don't know what it means. But when you have the servant speaking at length in the very next chapter, why might he not have spoken in this verse back here, and especially that reference to the Spirit.

The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches split over several differences a thousand years ago, but one of their great arguments was that the Western Church inserted into the creed that the Holy Spirit was sent by God and the Son, by the

Father and the Son. And I think there is no question Jesus Christ and the Father sent the Spirit. But also it is true that the Spirit rested upon Christ in his earthly ministry to a greater extent than ever upon anyone else. So whether you take this as object or subject, both are possible in the Hebrew, and both are true, so I think that verse 16, therefore, is a very interesting verse.

But it can mean, "He has sent me, and he has sent his Spirit." Or it can mean, "He sent me, and his Spirit has sent me." Both are plausible. The Hebrew does not decide between the two. It makes no distinction. Why should the Spirit be mentioned here? I think it's an anticipation of the truth that the New Testament presents more clearly. It's not an anticipation that we can build the entire truth of the Holy Spirit on but one where we can see the truth already suggested. Well now, so much for the present for chapter 48.

As I said before, we should start a new section with chapter 49. The new chapter begins in verse 14 with Zion's complaint: "But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.'" Now this is the complaint of Zion. We read all the wonderful things the servant must do. "But Zion says, 'The Lord has forgotten me, the Lord has forsaken me.'" So for a considerable space after this the Lord answers that objection. He assures Zion he has not forgotten her, and that the Lord has his blessings for Zion.

So he goes on and uses a figure of speech in verse 15 of chapter 49. "Can a mother forget a baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born? Though she may forget, I will not forget you." He goes on assuring Zion of his blessings down through verse 23. Then in verse 24 he says, "Can plunder be taken from warriors or captives rescued from the fierce? But this is what the Lord says: 'Yes, captives will be taken from warriors and plunder retrieved from the fierce. I will contend with those who contend with you.'"

Then in chapter 50, verse 1, he says, "This is what the Lord says: 'Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?'" That's a rhetorical question, clearly. It's just like the other two. "Will a mother forget her child?" Well a human mother may, but it's extremely unlikely. But the Lord says, in effect, my love to you is even greater than that of a mother to her child. Then, "Can plunder be taken from

warriors or captives rescued from the fierce?" Well it may be. But I'm going to do it definitely says the Lord; I'm going to rescue you.

Then chapter 40 it asks: has God forgiven you; has God forsaken you? "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away. When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea; I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst. I clothed the sky with darkness and make sackcloth its cover."

Now, when any of you said the new chapter should begin with chapter fifty, verse 4 rather than beginning where it does, I was pleased, because you then saw the progress of the outline, that it is a discussion from verse 14 of chapter 49, which should be the beginning of the chapter, and it is answered in the following three sections. So he deals with Zion's questions, assuring them of the continuance of God's love and how completely they can trust him. Then all of a sudden, with verse 4, you get something quite different.

Chapter 50, verse 4, certainly begins a new section. "The sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue." The "tongue of the learner," I believe is in the King James, which is certainly well expressed by the NIV as "an instructed tongue." "He has given me one to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back" (verses 4 and 5).

Are those two verses Isaiah himself assuring the people of how truly he has presented the word of God? Are they Isaiah, boasting of his fine ministry and his loyalty to God? Or are they the Servant again speaking, giving assurance that Jesus Christ will give his marvelous messages. People said of Jesus how does this man know so much? He's not educated. We find that in the gospel records. Jesus didn't speak like the scribes who had to figure things out every little bit. He spoke like one with authority. Is this the Servant here who says the Sovereign Lord is using me to know the word that sustains the

weary? Jesus said "Come onto me all ye that labor and are weary and I will give you rest." "The sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back." Well, we don't know if Isaiah ever drew back or not. But certainly there is no human being of whom this could so truly be said as the Lord Jesus Christ who did the work of the Lord at every step of the way.

But look at chapter 50, verse 6: what has that to do with Isaiah? "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting." Surely that is looking forward to the humiliation of the cross. Surely, then, we have here the Servant of the Lord speaking again that started with verse 4: "Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced; therefore have I set my face like flint. And I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near; who then will bring charges against me? Let us face one another. Who is my accuser? Let him confront me." Jesus confronted his accusers there and silenced them when he was arrested; they could find no cause of punishment in him. "It is the sovereign Lord who helps me, who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment. The moths will eat them up." It is only he who lives forever; it is he who was raised from the dead and still lives that this applies to.

"Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant?" Here is the reference to the servant. We did not have the word "servant" used before, but we certainly had him speaking. "Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God" (Isa 50:10). If we know Christ and we are saved through him, no matter how dark things may get around us, we can trust in him. No matter when we have to walk in the light when there is no light, if we are obeying the word of Christ, if we are following him, we can trust and rely on him."

And then he refers to those who refuse to accept the truth: "But now all you who light fires and provide yourself with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and the torches you have set ablaze" (Isaiah 50:11). Here are those who refuse to accept the light of the Scripture and who think that their own intelligence, their own study, their own progress are going to enable them to find the answers to life. He says, "This is what

you shall receive from my hand, you will lie down in torment."

Professor Carl Sagan of Cornell University is now having a series on the TV called "Cosmos," which is being aired three times a week now. He gives a great deal of interesting information about discovery, about astronomy, about the planets, and about the galaxy. But every now and then he brings in about these folks who escaped bigotry and got out into the pure light of science, and that science is the hope of the future and the great theme for progress and so on. In his book of the same name, he definitely says there's no such thing as God it's just the action of the brain. Thought is merely a secretion of the brain just like any other organ of the body secretes certain products. So the great progress for the future is science as we go out into distant areas and eventually we'll be able to go to Mars and to Venus and to all these things. Man is building up knowledge tremendously. But the Lord says, "All you who light fires and provide yourself with flaming torches, go walk in the light of the fires and of the torches you set ablaze. This is what you will receive from my hand: you will lie down in torment."

And so it is a question whether you are going to say that the Servant speaks from verse 4 and stops at verse 9, or whether it goes on through verse 11. But verses 10 and 11 do not seem to me at all out of place to consider as the servant still speaking, though I would not be dogmatic about that.

But I think this is tremendous how in chapter 50 here has the Servant, I believe, speaking again. I don't think we would ever recognize it if it wasn't for the Servant having spoken shortly before or having so much said about the servant later. So which in that context it is reasonable to consider the Servant being here. Otherwise it would be a mystery to us. Was Isaiah ever treated this way? Well we have no evidence he was. Of course, there is a tradition that in the latter part of Isaiah's life he was persecuted after the good King Hezekiah died and when evil kings came; there is a tradition; that he was martyred. But it's only a tradition there's no scriptural evidence for it. Even that would not fit as precisely with the terminology here as well the experience of Christ does.

Well then, we have the beginning of a new section, which is a long poem of God's coming blessing as he is going to protect the people, and he is going to deliver them with

a particular emphasis on the situation of their being in exile still. In the beginning of chapter 52 we have, “Awake! Awake, O Zion; clothe yourselves with splendor; put on your garments of splendor.” It continues until you have in verse 11, “Depart! Depart! Go out from there; touch no unclean thing. Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.” You remember Cyrus gave them the vessels from the temple. We don’t use the term “vessels” today, except for ships, of course. The Hebrew word here that’s translated “vessel” we might say, “utensil” today. It was the things from the temple that they carried back with them as they went across the desert.

Chapter 52, verse 12 says, “But you will not leave in haste or go in flight, for the Lord will go before you, for the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” Of course, they did not escape from Babylon by flight; Cyrus gave them permission to go back. So here was the definite prediction of the way they would come back from exile, and it is, I think, the last clear reference in this section of Isaiah to the return from exile. This had been the big stress up to this point, and we have touched upon the theme that sin is what brought them in to exile, that sin has to be dealt with. The Servant of the Lord is going to bring light to the Gentiles; he’s going to raise up the tribes of Israel, but he’s going to be humiliated. We find this in this chapter, and then we go on to find how he is going to redeem them from sin and how he is going to deliver them.

I think that if you can just review and perhaps look over this section for next class you’ll be doing well. We will pick up there next time.

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