

## **Allan MacRae, Isaiah 40-56, Lecture 12**

This is lecture 12 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae on Isaiah 40-56:

This morning I'd like to begin with Colossians 2:21: "Touch not, taste not, handle not." There have been temperance parades, which have carried big banners with these words. "Touch not, taste not, handle not." Recently, somebody sent me a copy of a hymn out of some hymnbook, which I hadn't happened to be familiar with, which was based on these words, and each verse was based on one of them. "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

Now, I believe that temperance, or in fact, total abstinence from that which is harmful, is certainly the proper attitude for the Christian to take. But for one to quote these words in support of it is utterly misusing the Scripture. The verses before and after read: "Therefore, if we be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why art thou living in the world subject to ordinances: Touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using?"

If you read the verse before or the verse after, it is very clear that this verse is not a good verse to teach total abstinence, and yet it has been used much for that purpose.

Now, we turn back to the book of Isaiah. There we look at chapter 54, the second verse; and we find in that verse, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations. Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes."

Nearly 200 years ago, in England, there was a man who made his living by fixing shoes, who also preached a good bit; and he had a marvelous gift for languages. He was named William Carey. Now William Carey preached a great sermon on this Isaiah 54:2, and on the basis of this text: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation. Spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes." He said that the Christians of England should

send people to carry the Gospel all the way over to India. He preached a great sermon, and the people were so interested in his sermon that they were ready to give money for the purpose. But he could not find anyone who would go. Someone challenged him, if you're so hep on this, why don't you go yourself, and he said, "I will." So he went to India and began the great modern missionary movement, and soon other groups began sending missionaries; and Carey did one of the greatest missionary works that ever has been done.

Was that missionary work founded upon taking a verse out of context? Was it founded upon taking a verse and drawing from it something that is not in that verse? Or did William Carey properly understand this verse? I think that is a rather important question. I think it is extremely important that we do not take the Bible simply as a collection of statements that can be taken out of context and made to read anything that the words could mean by themselves without context. I think that is important. I think it is important we interpret in the light of the context. And so I believe it is a rather important question whether William Carey was right or wrong in his interpretation.

Well now, in order to make a judgment on that, as in the case of Colossians, we have to look at the context. So we look at the verse immediately before it; I'll read from the NIV, though I have before me three other versions. I don't think the version makes any difference as far as I know: "'Sing, O barren women, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than her who has a husband,' says the Lord. 'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes'" (Isa. 54:1).

Now we have to ask the question, who is being addressed in this verse? To whom is he talking? In order to find that out, we have to ask two questions: What are the exact words of the text; what do they mean; is there a possibility of our misinterpreting some of them? And equally important, I believe, is the question: What is the context?

Now, you look at the context, and you find that this immediately succeeds chapter 53. We cannot, of course, jump to a conclusion and say that because it follows 53, therefore it is closely related to it. Perhaps the archbishop was right in making a chapter division here; perhaps those today who take the chapter divisions almost as if they were inspired are right in thinking that 53 ends a subject and a new subject begins here in chapter 54. Certainly a new paragraph begins. Certainly he did not make his chapter division in the wrong place here. It is pretty difficult to read straight through 53 to 54 without saying this is the right place for a chapter division. But is it a place for a major division where we go over to a different subject? Or does it fall immediately in thought after 53? Well, we need to keep that in mind that as a possibility.

We look at this verse, and we find that in it there seem to be two people addressed. "Sing O barren woman, you who never bore a child." Now that "never" is a little strong. "You who have not born a child" is just as true a translation. "Never" is a possibility. But the "not" could conceivably mean "not for a long time." So, we can't build too much on the word "never." You who either did "not" or "never" bore a child, burst into song, shout for joy. "You who were never in labor because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband, says the Lord." Now, the natural interpretation of it is that we have two different women here. One of them has not born a child. Perhaps that could be understood as the NIV has, never has, at least has not for a long time. The other one is spoken of as her who has a husband.

Now, there are interpreters who say, in fact, I believe all of the more liberal type interpreters, I think they without exception, would say that this verse describes Israel entirely: that the comparison of two women is a comparison between Israel in the exile and Israel after the exile. Israel in the exile did not bear children, though she had borne many of them before. And Israel after the exile is going to bare still more than before. She's going back to her own land and is going to be very prosperous. That is the interpretation that I believe all the

liberal commentaries, and I believe a considerable number of the conservative commentaries, take.

Now, that seems a bit forced to take the two women to be one woman at two different times. Yet I wouldn't say that is impossible. It certainly is a possibility worthy of consideration. What does it mean? "You who never bore a child, more are the children of the desolate woman." Well, that could be taken as meaning you'll have more people. You'll have more children. But "the woman" is certainly a figurative term here for a nation or a large group. It certainly is not describing one individual. Therefore, we are justified in thinking that it is most likely that here that bearing a child is also somewhat figurative. It may refer to the nation producing those who were great servants of the Lord who accomplished much for him. Well, you certainly couldn't say Israel had never borne a child in that sense. We think of Moses; we think of David; we think of all the great leaders of God's people who were produced by Israel before the exile. Israel certainly had borne children in that sense then. But during the exile, Israel had not been barren in this sense. We have prophets who came during the exile. Certainly, Daniel was one of the very greatest. And certainly, Daniel, a great spiritual leader, was produced by Israel, and there were others during the exile.

So to say Israel was barren during the exile and had produced many great, godly leaders as before is not a true comparison. If you speak of it as spiritual benefits, certainly Israel before the exile had produced many great spiritual benefits. There had been many times when the nation had been very loyal to the Lord. It had in many ways produced much that could be spoken of as having borne a child. But if you take the "never" as meaning "not," maybe during the exile they did not produce much in this regard, and yet that hardly seems likely. Look at Daniel. Look at Nehemiah. Thinking not of the men now but the influence that these and many others had. But there would be much less in that regard. That might be a possibility.

But the thing to me that clinches it is the last part: "More are the children of

the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Now, if “her who had a husband” is Israel before the exile, which I think it certainly must be because the Bible uses the figure of Israel as the bride of the Lord, I think it certainly must be that she is the one who has a husband. Who, then, is the desolate woman? Well, Israel during the time of the exile when she seemed to be forsaken. If that’s the comparison, then it would have to say they produced more during the exile than before because if Israel was the married woman before the exile, she certainly was equally so after the return. So to say that Israel after the return produces more of great leaders and more of great spiritual blessing than Israel during the exile cannot be properly described by saying “More are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” It would be rather the one who has come back to her husband and comparison with her before she left.

So it seems to me that we really ought to agree with the apostle Paul that this is a comparison between Israel and something else, some other group: Israel according to the flesh and something else. We have already studied this semester and seen how in Isaiah 42 it describes the Servant of the Lord as bringing light to the Gentiles. We have seen the same note in Isaiah 49. We have seen the same note particularly at the beginning of chapter 53. So it seems to me that it is proper to take this as saying that those great individuals who are great ones in the Kingdom of God are to be more numerous who are produced by the one who formerly was desolate than the one whom God used so greatly during the centuries previous to the coming of Christ. This fits right in with its following chapter 53, which describes the atonement of Christ. So it seems to me that is the only reasonable way to take chapter 54, verse 1.

And if you take verse 1 in that way, then verse 2 is saying to these who believe in him: “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out your tent curtains wide; lengthen your chords, strengthen your stakes.” So William Carey was using this verse exactly in accordance with what it means. It is a great missionary verse. Now I said it agrees with the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul in Romans 9 quotes

other verses from the Old Testament that are about equally clear to this as showing God's turning to the Gentiles. In Galatians, he quotes this verse in a slightly different sense, but yet I believe it fits right with his interpretation of some similar verses from Isaiah 9 and elsewhere in Romans 9.

So I am saying that the "desolate" here refers to the nations outside of Israel that receive the message, including the kings who say, "who will believe what we have heard?"

He's making the comparison of Israel then to the situation now where people from Israel and from other nations are believing in Christ and are producing more of spiritual value in the world than those who are continuing the tradition from before, which God had greatly used before. So as they say, it's not exactly like the way he uses other verses in Romans 9, but it is related to it. It has a definite relation to it, and the other verses he quotes in Romans 9 are not any clearer in that regard than this is. I think that perhaps does help to clarify it.

Now look at verses 5 and 6 where he says, "Your Maker *is* your husband. The Lord Almighty is his name. The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer". Here he is referring to one who has a husband. He's talking to Israel. So to say that Israel is the barren one, the desolate one, the one that had produced practically nothing before, would not fit with verse 1. Verse 1, the desolate one is the one who sees Gentiles outside the faith, those who seem to have no relation to God, though this cannot be taken in an absolute sense, but almost absolute. God kept the memory of himself alive simply through Israel through all those centuries. But now, after Calvary, he called that the word be sent out throughout all the world. The one that was desolate--that is, the Gentile nations who believe--now becomes the one that has more children than Israel.

But in the next few verses there is no doubt that he turns his attention back to Israel. Verses 1-3 are speaking of the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles. I don't think there is any question of that. It is carrying the message to the world.

Then in verses 4-10 he looks specifically at Israel. In these verses he speaks of one who seems to be a widow, one who had the shame of her youth who had seemed to be a widow, who had been a wife deserted and distressed in the spirit of a wife who married young only to be rejected. Verse 7 says, “For a brief moment I abandoned you.” That refers to Israel in the exile. “For a brief moment I abandoned you;” He had abandoned the Gentiles for a while. Except for the occasional one, they had been outside the pale during the whole Old Testament time. There were occasional Gentiles, however, who had received the message of the Lord.

But Israel was the instrument through which God brought his truth, and mostly to the people of Israel before the exile. Then Israel seemed to be a widow, a young wife who was rejected in the exile. ““For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you’, says the Lord your redeemer”. So in verses 4-10 he describes God’s blessing to Israel.

Our whole section from 40-56 has dealt with two themes. It has dealt with Israel in exile and God’s comforting them saying, “I will bring you back,” but saying the reason you went into exile was on account of your sin. There’s hardly any direct rebuke in this whole section except for occasionally in two to three verses, and then immediately he returns to blessings. The whole section is a section of comfort, and in that regard, different from almost any other part of Isaiah or of the prophetic books in general, which have the great emphasis on rebuke for sin. Here sin is brought in incidentally to remind the suffering people that the reason they are suffering is on account of their sin rather than direct rebuke for sin. It’s nearly all comfort, and they are assured God has not rejected his people. As Paul asks rhetorically, "Has God cast off his people whom he foreknew? Assuredly not! He has not cast off his people" (Romans 11:1). But the turning to the Gentiles is, I believe, specifically predicted in 54, verses 1-3, as

following Isaiah 53. Then we go on to the great blessing of Israel following the exile. Of course, continuing on, he says that he will never forsake them “‘though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken or my covenant of peace be removed,’ says the Lord who has compassion on you.”

Verses 11 and 12 I would say are still speaking of Israel, but they do refer to all the followers of God. We speak of the Gentiles, then we speak of Israel, then here we are referring to all the followers of God; “O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted; I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundation with sapphires, I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.” Those verses, I believe, express a blessing that is perhaps in the first instance referring to Israel, but that all believers certainly have a right to take it to themselves that God has a purpose, a blessed purpose, in the light of all those who are truly his. We can definitely take that thought in it, but not as an exclusive thought.

But then from verses 13 to 17, the rest of it, I think, he is clearly speaking of all believers, of all the followers of the Lord whether they are Jew or Gentile. He has started with the turning to the Gentiles then gone on for a space to Israel again, and he is now speaking of the whole body of believers, of those whom God has destined to be his people through all eternity. Verse 13, “All your sons will be taught of the Lord, and great will be your children’s peace. In righteousness you will be established.” I think verse 14 should have started with “Tyranny will be far from you.” But there he is speaking of God’s teaching of his people and establishing them in righteousness.

Then verse 14, “Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Tyranny will be far removed; it will not come near you.” We certainly have to take that to some extent, as figurative, referring to God’s enabling us, no matter what external circumstances are, to find our peace in him because certainly Israel has had terrible times with terror and tyranny, and so has the church. So have all



believers during this period. God gives us peace in the heart. I think that is important.

Chapter 54 verse 15, “If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you.” That would, perhaps, probably point to the end of the line of the kingdom stressed by what Paul stressed in Romans 9 where he tells a strange thing that the Gentiles have become more numerous as the people of God than the number of the Jews who have accepted Christ and been born again through him. Yet all through the ages, in every generation, there have been Jews who have come to the Lord, many of whom have become real leaders in the Christian Church all through the ages.

Paul says who are you to answer against God. God's sovereign will is the best. He works all things out in accordance with his wonderful plan, and we have that stress in verses 16 and 17: “See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flames and forges the weapons fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc.” God is controlling all things. ““No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. And this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.”

All the modern translation say "vindication" here. But the King James says "that their righteousness is from me," and I believe that in this case the King James is definitely right. The word is "righteousness." Now, this word can be used in the context where somebody's righteousness has been attacked and they've been vindicated. So “vindication” is possible as a meaning of the word, but I don't think that is the primary meaning at all. It is the righteousness that God imputes to us through Christ, that comes from him to all who believe in his name.

So I believe that chapter 54 follows 53; that is, 52:13 through 53, showing God's great work of atonement of sin through Christ's the great victory over Satan--the victory in principle over Satan, the victory that will eventually be carried to full realization. Chapter 53 describes this tremendous work, which is the

answer to the problem of the exile. We started with the exile, this long passage from chapter 40. Exile is the present difficulty. The cause of exile is sin, and if the sin problem isn't taken care of, there are bound to be more exiles. Sin is the primary problem, and that is solved in 52:13 to the end of 53. It is solved in principle by the great act that God did through Christ, and in 53 we have 5 or 6 clear statements of his substitutionary atonement, of his bearing our sins.

Then 54 describes the outreach of that to all the nations and also its relationship to Israel and God's continuing mercy to Israel. The last part of it refers to all the people of God: "Their righteousness is from me." It's a very strong word "from" here: "from with me" literally. The righteousness must be the imputed righteousness, which God gives us on the basis of what Christ did on Calvary, and which he gave to many Israelites during Old Testament times on the basis of what Jesus would do at Calvary.

So chapter 55 is divided certainly in the right place for a chapter division. It is not a great division of the subject, it is a minor division but still following 53. It is continuing to show the outworking of what Jesus did on Calvary.

This is one of the greatest gospel invitations to be found anywhere in the Scripture, and there is no other way to take it. Chapter 55 makes an offer on the basis of what God did through Christ in 53. "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Buy wine and milk without money and without price; eat what is good, and your soul will delight itself in the fatness. Give ear and come to me; hear that your soul may live." Here is an invitation to come: nothing required, simply come and receive. How can God give an invitation like that?

I heard of an evangelist who was speaking to a group. He was speaking on this passage of invitation and there was a miner who couldn't understand. "You mean that God simply offers me eternal life? That there's nothing I have to do, just receive it? That all I have to do is just take it? How could that be?" He said. How could something as tremendous as eternal life be simply given with no expense?

And the evangelist tried hard to make it clear to him, and finally the miner gave an illustration, which the evangelist decided was the one of the best that he'd heard. The miner was accustomed to working deep in the coal mines. There he would descend deep into the coal mines and he would work there. At the end of the day he would come to the little skiff that was down there, say, nearly a mile deep, which had heavy chains that would pull him up. And he would just sit in the skiff, then and when he and the other miners would sit in the skiff, somebody would pull something that would ring a bell up above and the thing would be pulled up, and they would come up to the top. He said "I don't have to do anything to get up out of there. All I have to do is to get into the skiff and sit there." But he said it cost the company an awful lot to put in that whole apparatus and to pull it up.

Certainly here is an invitation in chapter 55, which is absolutely inconceivable, apart from its relation to chapter 53 that it follows. God has paid a tremendous price to make it possible, He gave his only begotten son. He gave the greatest expense, the greatest cost, the greatest sacrifice that anyone could give, when he gave his only begotten son to make it possible merely to receive the results of what Jesus has done. Salvation is tremendously expensive, but the expense is paid by God, not by any one of us. All we have to do is simply to receive what he has given.

So we have chapter 53 describing the tremendous work that God does through Christ on Calvary. We have chapter 54 showing the outreach and outworking of this tremendous work as it goes out to all the nations of the world while he continues his wonderful mercy to Israel. His mercy, which he says repeatedly in the Old Testament, is everlasting. But then it ends with the united people of God, including Israel and those from many nations. This is God's continuing blessing. The righteousness is from Him. It is the imputed righteousness of Christ, and now we have the specific personal invitation to all: come without money and without price. Why do you spend your labor trying to get what you can never possibly earn? Simply rest in the finished work of Christ

and receive what he has offered you, which cost him a tremendous amount, but which costs you nothing. You simply receive his marvelous blessing through Christ. So we have this marvelous invitation, which is given here and occupies most of the chapter. In the end, it describes the great blessings, the blessings the earth is to receive as the curse is removed from the earth and "instead of the thorn bush, will grow the pine tree. Instead of briars, the myrtle tree. And this will be for the Lord's renown for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

In verses 8 and 9, he says, "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

I was once asked to speak to a group of students at a state college and they were studying in their class a book on Western civilization. This book showed the various stages in the thought of Western civilization and it showed how "second Isaiah" believed in a God who was so far away that he was not at all interested in what happens to individuals on this earth. For "second Isaiah" said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Of course, I simply showed them that the Professor had simply taken the verse quite out of the context. I don't think he would be quite so stupid as himself to do that. I think he was resting his conclusion on a secondary source, what somebody else had taken out of context because you just read the previous verse and it says, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thought. Let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will freely pardon." The whole context is God's definite interest in people on this earth and his doing so much for them. But in this book, which these students were forced to memorize and to learn to understand in Western civilization, they learned how Isaiah 55 taught that God was so removed from the world; he wasn't even

interested in it. It's another instance of how easy it is to take a verse out of context and get an entirely false idea from it.

Now we have up in chapter 55, verse 3, "Give ear and come to me. Hear me that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. My unfailing kindness is promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel." It ties it right in to God's promises to David--that through David's greater son he will summon people from all the nations to come to believe in Christ and that eventually he will give them complete control over this entire world. He ends up with the assurance in chapter 55, verse 10 and following, that "as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." So God gives assurance that his work will be accomplished in accordance with his plan. His plan is that all may come freely; whoever will simply receive what God, what Jesus Christ, did at Calvary.

Now, the beginning of chapter 56, I think, is in the wrong place. In chapter 55 we have been using the second person, "you." "All you who are thirsty come. Do this, do that, receive this, receive that." It is in the second person. The second person continues in the first two verses of chapter 56. Also, chapter 56, from verse 3 on for many verses, has one definite idea, that is not contained in the first two. Now, the first two are a little different from what preceded, but not a great deal. I believe they belong back with chapter 55. There might be a very minor paragraph division at the beginning of 56, but there is a more important break after verse 2. Verses 1 and 2 continue God's word to those who can come freely. This is what the Lord says, "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed," definitely continuing

the same idea that was in chapter 55. Then in verse 2: “Blessed is the man who does this; the man who holds it fast; who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it and keeps his hand from doing any evil.” The one who is saved, he is not saved because of what he has done. He cannot earn salvation, but if he truly has received God’s wonderful gift, you will see it in his life. He will carry out God’s law. You will see in the results of the way his life continues; he will keep his hand from doing any evil as he is gradually changed in his character, as God wishes all of us to do. That’s to say, justification is an instantaneous thing, but sanctification continues for a very long time. We are gradually made over into the image of Christ. If one is truly born again, you can see the fruits in his life.

Now, you can’t always be too quick in making such a decision because one man, as far as his Christian character is concerned, may seem much inferior to some individuals who repudiate the Scripture and yet who seem to have a far finer character. But the question is: where did they start? God gives us salvation instantaneously, but he takes us where we are; he does not completely sanctify us immediately. He takes us where we are, and we gradually improve as we keep our eyes on him and study the Word. So the question is not where we are, but what direction we’re moving in. The one who is truly saved is trying to grow in grace; he is looking to God to give him deliverance over all the particular problems that come to him.

Now we have had mostly blessing from chapter 40 on--very different from most sections of Isaiah, and very different from most sections of the prophetic books. Chapter 40 on has been mostly blessing. You could not find over 40 verses in the whole section, perhaps not over 20, that are really rebuke. It is blessing to those who are suffering. It is showing how they will be saved from the exile, how they will be rescued; but more particularly, how you can be saved from the sin that causes exile, and that causes all the miseries of life. This blessing, this message of blessing, which has been complete in these recent chapters with not a bit of rebuke in it, continues in chapter 56 until you get to verse 9.

At verse 9 you have a complete change. Verse 9 on is a strong rebuke for sin, which continues into chapter 57; and so I would say that at 56 verse 9, there is one of the major divisions of the book of Isaiah. We are looking this year at Isaiah's "Book of Comfort," beginning with chapter 40 and ending in chapter 56, verse 8. So we will not look at verse 9 and on, which really should be part of 57. There is no reason for a chapter division at the beginning of chapter 57 for it continues right straight on with the same topic begin in 56:9). We've had two or three verses of rebuke in earlier chapters in this section at the end of a chapter but there's always been blessing at the beginning of the next chapter. But here the passage of rebuke is a very long one, beginning at verse 9 and it indicates that an entirely different section of the book has begun.

So our work for this semester ends with verse 8 of chapter 56. In chapter 56 verses 3 to 8. We have one thought in verses 3 to 8 repeated over and over again. It is one of the great themes in connection with the atonement of Christ. It is the absolute lack of discrimination in the results of the work that Christ is doing. In the Old Testament times, in order to keep alive the memory of the knowledge of the true God in the midst of a world that turned its back on him and wanted to deny him altogether, and worship all kinds of idols and false ideas in the face of that situation, God confined his revelation mostly to Israel. And to keep that revelation pure, there were sharp lines drawn that God ordered between Israel and other nations in the time before the coming of Christ. Even during Christ's earthly ministry, he said he came to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." While he predicted the going out of the message to all the world, he did not engage in that at all prior to the crucifixion. But after that, he then gradually made it clear to the disciples that now the word was to go out to all the world.

So we start in verse 3, "Let no foreigner who's joined himself to the Lord say 'the Lord will surely exclude me from his people.' Let no eunuch complain, 'I am a dry tree.'" For this is what the Lord says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant, to them I

will give within my temples and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters.’” And the whole thought of this section is, that God will make his house a house of prayer for all peoples. “The sovereign Lord who gathers the exiles of Israel says, ‘I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.’” We have the results of the atonement of Christ laid out, described, and predicted. This results in the outgoing of the gospel to all the world beginning with chapter 54:1 and 2, then the declaration that his mercy to Israel is not finished, but it continues as seen in verse 4.

In verse 4 his mercy continues to Israel, then in the last part of this section, his mercy and blessing extend to all those who are true followers of his. The statement at the very end of this section is that his plan will certainly be carried out as he desires for his wonderful purposes. Then in chapter 55, we have the marvelous invitation to receive the results of the atonement without money, without price. This wonderful offer of salvation through 56:2 is based upon the righteousness of Christ, imputing to us the results of the atonement, and then in 56, verses 3 to 8, the fact that there is no distinction in it between Jew and Gentile, but that all are free to come, all can receive the blessing. The thought that begins chapter 54 here ends the whole section, that there is no distinction within the body of Christ: that the line, the partition, as Paul says, is broken down.

So that completes this section, this wonderful "Book of Comfort" section of Isaiah 40-56. I've tried to bring out how it begins with exile, begins with this specific situation and goes on from there to look forward to Christ's coming and way beyond. I've sought to show how, gradually, the problem of sin is the vital question that must be dealt with: that all things natural, physical, prosperity, everything of that kind is secondary to the problem of sin, and how God deals with the problem of sin. We can find peace in God whatever happens, knowing that his will is best and that he is sovereign and in absolute control. Salvation is open to all who come, and we are to lengthen our chords, strengthen our faiths, and carry out



the message that he wants us to have. So that concludes our discussion of this part of the book.

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## Outline of Lecture 12: Isaiah 40-56

- I. Reading out of Context
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    - i. Used to support total abstinence
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- II. Isaiah 54:2
  - a. William Kerry used to support his missionary work
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  - a. Division of the chapters 53 – 54
  - b. Interpretation of the last verse in 53 held by liberal and conservative commentaries
  - c. The lecturer's own opinion
    - i. Great leaders
      - 1. Moses
      - 2. Daniel
      - 3. David
  - d. Who is the desolate woman?
  - e. Paul's comparison
    - i. Isaiah 9, 42, 49, 53
    - ii. Romans 9
    - iii. Galatians
- IV. Israel
  - a. Vs. 1-3
    - i. Taking of the Gospel
  - b. Vs. 4-10
    - i. Looks at Israel
    - ii. God's blessing to Israel
    - iii. Vs. 7 refers to Israel
  - c. Vs. 11 -12
    - i. Speaks of Israel
  - d. Vs. 13-17
    - i. Speaking of all Believers
    - ii. Vs. 14
      - 1. Tyranny
    - iii. Vs. 16-17
      - 1. Stresses what Paul said in Romans 7
- V. Conclusion
  - a. Isaiah 54 follows 53
  - b. Isaiah 52:12- 53:12
    - i. God's great atonement of sin through Christ

- c. Isaiah 53
  - i. 5-6 clear statements of substitutionary atonement of God burying our sin
- d. Isaiah 54
  - i. Describes the outreach of God burying our sin to all nations
- e. Isaiah 55
  - i. It is continuing to show the outworking of what Jesus did on Calvary
  - ii. One of the greatest gospel invitations to be found anywhere in the scripture
- f. Isaiah 56
  - i. Vs. 8 ends the “Book of Comfort”
  - ii. Chapter 57 should start after vs. 8