

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 28
The Messianic Psalms – Part 11 – Psalm 72
October 7, 1997

Intro: Psalm 72 needs to be considered in the light of a great statement which we find in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning our Lord:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

The Scriptures are very clear about the coming universal dominion of our Lord, the Messiah. *Psalm 72 was considered by the Jews to be a Messianic Psalm.* It is true that it is a prayer of King David (see verse 20) for his son, King Solomon, but the expressions of the rule of the King go so far beyond what Solomon ever had (although his kingdom was great), that it could only point to the time when our Lord will rule on earth as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

When the Apostle Paul was concluding his first epistle to Timothy, he charged him with his ministry in these words:

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

The Messianic reign of our Lord is spoken of many times in the OT. For example, in Isaiah 11 we have these words:

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins (Isa. 11:1-5).

So it is not surprising that in this Psalm (72) where David was praying for his son, Solomon, that he went beyond what Solomon would experience and expressed words which will only be fulfilled when our Lord Jesus comes in glory to reign upon the earth.

Even in that familiar passage in Philippians 2, we have a prediction of the coming glory of our Lord when He will reign upon the earth:

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and

things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

But let us get to our Psalm. I believe the following outline gives us the divisions of the Psalm:

- 1) The righteousness of the Messiah's reign (vv. 1-7).
- 2) The extent of the Messiah's reign (vv. 8-11).
- 3) The goodness of the Messiah's reign (vv. 12-14).
- 4) The permanence of the Messiah's reign (vv. 15-17).
- 5) A doxology in praise of the Messiah (vv. 18-19).
- 6) A postscript (v. 20).

It seems to be the opinion of the students of the Hebrew who have studied this Psalm that the superscription should read, A Psalm *of* Solomon, instead of, A Psalm *for* Solomon. But it seems that verse 1 indicates the king was praying for himself, and for his son. This sounds like David and Solomon. And then at the end we are told in the postscript, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” So it seems that this definitely was David's prayer for Solomon, but it may have been, as Spurgeon has suggested, that David was too old to write it, and that Solomon wrote it, but that actually it was David's prayer for Solomon in which he was enabled by the Holy Spirit to project his petition beyond even Solomon's day to the time when the Messiah would reign upon the earth.

Whatever the situation may have been as far as the writer is concerned, we know that the Holy Spirit was the Author. And so let us consider the Psalm with our focus upon Christ, and yet seeing the heart of David as he interceded for his son, Solomon.

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN (Psa. 72:1-7).

In the book of Proverbs which must have been written after this Psalm, this is what Solomon declared: “It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12). How different conditions might be in our country today if our leaders *knew* this, and *believed* it! But righteousness was obviously David's great concern for himself, and for his son who would reign after him. The Lord Jesus is not only righteous in all that He does, but He is “the Lord our righteousness.” We learn this from a Messianic passage in Jeremiah's prophecy:

15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness (Jer. 33:15-16).

But note that in verse 1 God's “righteousness” is preceded by His “judgments.” God's judgments are the expression of His will, and this we find in the Word of God. Anything outside of the judgments of the Lord, is Unrighteousness! So if a kingdom is to be characterized by righteousness, it must be established within the limits of the will of God. Righteousness is impossible otherwise.

Note how “righteousness” dominates this part of the Psalm. See vv. 1, 2, 3, and 7.

In verse 2 we see that only as the king gets his righteousness from God will he exercise righteousness and true judgment toward the people, and especially toward the poor (those who usually suffer the most when a king is not righteous. There is no respect of persons with God, and there must not be with His king either. How

prominent compassion for the poor and the common people was in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ! Spurgeon said, “What a consolation to feel that none can suffer wrong in Christ’s kingdom” (Vol. 2, p. 226).

Righteousness always brings peace. Isaiah spoke of this in Isa. 32:17-18:

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

The same is true concerning our salvation (which is probably what these opening verses of Psalm 72 are talking about). Cf. Rom. 5:1: “Therefore being justified [declared righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The mention of the mountains and hills indicates that even the produce of the land reflects the blessing of God when a king rules in righteousness and according to the judgments of God. High places were often occupied by the enemy when they invaded the land, but under the rule of a righteous king the mountains and hills were places where crops grew abundantly.

From the land, David turned to the people again in verse 4 (as in v. 2). Now for the first time children are mentioned. Do we remember how the children wanted to come to the Lord when He was here on earth, and how He took them up in His arms and blessed them? And parents were not afraid to bring their children to the Lord. In fact, parents in great numbers brought their children to the Lord. “The children of the needy” are the poorest of the poor. But that is different under a righteous king, and will be extremely different under the reign of the Messiah.

An oppressor is one who abuses others. Child abuse is one of the great tragedies of our day. When governments and people become corrupt, children are often the ones who suffer the most. *There will be absolutely no child abuse under the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The oppressor will be crushed and broken.

When we come to verse 5, we come to the first of two sections in this Psalm which speak of *the permanence and prosperity of the righteous king’s rule. And this is a picture of the glory of the Messiah’s kingdom.* Again let me refer to Solomon’s book of Proverbs.

Two verses (and maybe more) apply here:

- 1) Prov. 28:28, “When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.”
- 2) Prov. 29:2, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

It is common for kings to have trouble with people who rebel against them. But we are told in verse 5 that the Messiah especially shall have no such trouble. “Fear” in this verse does not mean to dread or to be terrorized, but it is used in the sense of respecting, honor, reverence, even love, the king. And this doesn’t stop. It is expressed in terms which we understand. “As long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations.” Under wicked kings, people are dissatisfied, lose respect for their leaders, and finally rebel. But people are content to be under a righteous king. David and Solomon had their faults, but they were good kings. However, no king who has ever lived, or who will live in the future, could possibly compare with the coming Messiah.

Derek Kidner believes that verse 6 may have been prompted by what David said in 2 Sam. 23:3-4 where we

read,

3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

4 And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain (2 Sam 23:3-4).

What a description of a king we have here in verse 6. He is like a refreshing rain which not only waters the earth, but, in the process, makes things grow! Listen to Spurgeon’s comment, in part, upon this verse:

Those great conquerors who have been the scourges of mankind have fallen like the fiery hail of Sodom, transforming fruitful lands into deserts: but he with mild, benignant influence softly refreshes the weary and wounded among men, and makes them spring up into newness of life (Vol. 2, p. 228).

Spurgeon continued:

Pastures mown with the scythe, or shorn by the teeth of cattle, present, as it were so many bleeding stems of grass, but when the rain falls it is balm to all these wounds, and it renews the verdure and beauty of the field... My soul, how well it is for thee to be brought low, and to be even as the meadows eaten bare and trodden down by cattle, for then to thee shall the Lord have respect; He shall remember thy misery, and with His own most precious love restore thee to more than thy former glory. Welcome Jesus Thou true... Well-beloved, Thou art far more than Titus ever was—the Delight of Mankind... Each crystal drop of rain tells of heavenly mercy which forgets not the parched plains: Jesus is all grace, all that He does is love, and His presence among men is joy. We need to preach Him more, for no shower can so refresh the nations. Philosophic preaching mocks men as with a dust shower, but the Gospel meets the case of fallen humanity, and happiness flourishes beneath its genial power. Come down, O Lord, upon my soul, and my heart shall blossom with Thy praise (*Ibid.*).

Verse 7 shows that a righteous king produces righteous followers. And they shall flourish, not only individually, but also in numbers. The word “flourish” actually means *to sprout, spring up, shoot forth*. And peace, likewise, shall be in “abundance.” This is what Rom. 5:1 tells us, isn’t it? “Therefore being justified [declared righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How different a nation is under righteous leaders, and how different the world will be in that day when our Lord Jesus Christ is ruling as the Messiah, King of kings and Lord of lords! He is “Jesus Christ, the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

October 13, 1997

Now we come to the second part of the Psalm:

II. THE EXTENT OF THE MESSIAH’S REIGN (Psa. 72:8-11).

David never experienced what is recorded in these four verses, and neither did Solomon (even though Solomon’s kingdom was extended to many nations. But verse 8 indicates that the earthly kingdom of our Lord will be universal, world-wide. There have been many extensive kingdoms throughout the history of the world, but none as great as this, and certainly none which were characterized by righteousness. It seems that the more power men get, the more corrupt they get. But this will not be true with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The “sea” mentioned here could be the Mediterranean Sea, and the river, the Euphrates River. It begins with the land which the Lord gave to Abraham, but it extends “unto the ends of the earth.” And He will do this by

His own power. The words in the first part of verse 9 are used to describe both men and beasts. In Isa. 13:21 we read that the “wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures.” Psalm 74:14 speaks of “the people inhabiting the wilderness.” So verse 9 seems to indicate that the Lord will subdue animals as well as nations. And what we read in Isa. 11:4-9 certainly confirms this:

- 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
- 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
- 6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.
- 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.
- 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:4-9).

The last part of verse 9, “his enemies shall lick the dust,” implies, as one commentator has said, “the most unconditional and abject submission” (Alexander, J. A., *The Psalms, Translated and Explained*, p. 303).

In verse 10 we see in greater detail a description of the submission of the nations. The “presents” and “gifts” are not tribute which nations were forced to give to their conquerors in ancient times, but these are words that are used in the OT for sacrificial offerings. We know from Scripture that the extension of the Messiah’s kingdom is going to mean salvation for many in the nations of the earth, and so these “presents” and “gifts” are thank offerings which the nations bring to express the gratitude of a redeemed people. The Gospel has been going to the Gentiles in a special way ever since our Lord died and ascended back to the Father, but nothing will ever compare with what is going to take place following the return of Christ to reign.

The name of “Tarshish” and “Sheba and Seba” are probably representative of wealthy nations which will give generously in gratitude for the Messiah’s blessing. Tarshish was probably in Spain (although we cannot be absolutely certain). This is where Jonah was headed, and it seems that it was in the far west. The “isles” were along the Mediterranean coast. And Sheba and Seba represented the south. So the idea seems to be to give a picture of the universal submission to the Messiah, and their grateful acknowledgment of the blessings of the Messiah.

Verse 11 completes the picture. Not only the nations near at hand will worship the Messiah and serve Him willingly, but “all kings” and “all nations” will join in the exaltation of the Messiah. The world has never seen such a turning to the Lord, such willing and total submission to the Son of God. This is what I read to you a moment ago from Isa. 11:9:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

What a glorious scene this is! Many speak of it as Paradise Restored, but the reign of the Messiah will go beyond anything that men have ever imagined would be possible. The nations will be forced to recognize Who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

This bring us to the third section of the Psalm:

III. THE GOODNESS OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN (Psa. 72:12-14).

The test of the goodness of any monarch is to be seen in his treatment of those who are helpless and needy and trodden down by their fellow men.

Reference is made here to *the cries of the needy*. This does not necessarily mean that they were crying to God, but simply in their misery and helpless condition, they were crying. The Lord always hears the cry of the destitute, and *rescues* them, snatching them away from those who would harm them, and from the bitter circumstances which cause so much suffering. "The poor" are singled out for special mention. They have no way to purchase help. The Lord takes special delight in helping the helpless.

The Lord not only rescues the poor and needy, but then He *saves* them. He protects them from further trouble. Note in verse 13 that the first part of the verse is expressed concerning the single poor people, but in the latter part of the verse a change is made as is indicated by the plural: "souls." The two weapons that the wicked use against the poor are "deceit and violence." There are many ways of harming people. "Deceit" suggests the promise of good, or of some advantage to be gained. But the promises are not only made in "deceit," but often the end is the worst kind of violence. "Redeem" carries with it the idea of restoring that which was taken away, or even going beyond that which was taken away. The Lord is never concerned about what we deserve, or just what we need. He always goes far beyond what we could ever ask or think.

CONCERNING OUR LORD - ISA. 53:9.

To say that "their blood" is "precious...in his sight" means that their lives are precious. When men forget about God, human life is cheapened. Violence is characteristic of godless men. But with God things are very different. Every soul is more important to Him than all the wealth of the world, and He deals with us on that basis.

Next we see:

IV. THE PERMANENCE OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN (Psa. 72:15-17).

The "he" at the beginning of this verse, and following from the "he" in verse 12, verse 13, and verse 14, must be the Lord, the Messiah. "He shall live." He is Jehovah, the ever-living One. He was dead, but is alive forever more. Death has not more dominion over Him.

"Sheba" was mentioned in verse 10, and was famous for its gold. "Gold" shall be given to Him, the Messiah. We remember that when He was still a child, wise men came from the east to present to Him "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Matt. 2:11). The Lord has no need of anything that we can bring to Him, but this costly gift will be an expression of the love that the people have for their King, their Messiah.

"Prayer also shall be made for him continually." This statement may surprise us, but let us remember that just before He was arrested and then crucified, He asked His disciples to "watch" with Him. However, in the passage before us we have the Lord in His glory. So the prayer must be for the continuation of the blessings that people will experience because of His grace, that God would continue to bless and prosper Him.

And this verse (15) ends with the statement, "And daily shall he be praised." How different conditions will be in those days! Today people have no good to say about our Lord. It seems that no one recognizes that the blessings we enjoy today come from Him. Most people sit down to eat their food without the slightest thought that God has provided their food for them. But in those days prayer will be made for Him, and daily He will be

praised. It is hard to imagine that this will be a prevailing condition in the day of our Lord’s reign.

Earlier in the Psalm we learned that even the animals will be submissive to the rule of the Messiah. Here in this verse we learn that there will be an abundance of food, corn growing even on the top of the mountains. Lebanon which has always been known for its cedars, will in these millennial days be known for its fruit. Cities will flourish like the grass. Lucille and I were noticing yesterday how the grass along the freeways, banks that just a few days ago were brown from the sun, have now been transformed into luscious grass! This is a picture of the prosperity that cities will enjoy during the reign of our Lord on earth.

In verse 17 we are reminded that in that day the blessing of the Lord will not go unnoticed. The “name” of our Lord shall endure forever.” That Name which has been so despised by men, and used blasphemously on the lips of wicked people, women as well as men, will finally be given the love and honor and worship which it so deserves.

“Jesus,” oh how sweet the Name!
 “Jesus,” ev’ry day the same;
 “Jesus,” let all saints proclaim
 Its worthy praise for ever!

We have all kinds of blessings referred to in this Psalm, blessings which come from the King, the Messiah. The poor are rescued and kept. The animals share in the blessing. The land flourishes; crops abound. There is gold in abundance. And even cities, which are the scene of so much crime and injustice throughout the history of the world, flourish under the blessing of God. And what is the greatest blessing of all is that God is praised day after day because of the blessings He brings through His Son, the Messiah, our own precious Lord Jesus Christ.

The Psalm ends with:

V. A DOXOLOGY OF PRAISE FOR THE MESSIAH (Psa. 72:18-19).

This is how the Lord is to be praised, not just in that millennial day of the future, *but now!* David seemed overwhelmed with the power of God, and the goodness of God, and the grace of God! After the dreadful way that the Lord Jesus has been treated by all of us, it is nothing short of amazing that such blessings are yet to come. But a reminder of what is yet to be, is also a reminder of the blessings that we have even now. And to “the Lord God, the God of Israel,” and the God of the church, we must give our praise. No one else deserves it but the Lord. He “only doth wondrous things.”

Spurgeon referred to a man by the name of Quesnel who said that “these verses explain themselves.” And Spurgeon added that “they are rather to be used for adoration than for exposition” (Vol. II, p. 231). They form a fitting conclusion to the second book of the Psalms, and should stir our hearts to recognize the many blessings which God gives us, so that we can praise the Lord God as David praised Him. It is very obvious that David’s heart was raised in heavenly praise even though his feet still stood on the earth.

Let me close by reading to you Spurgeon’s concluding words on this Psalm, and especially in

VI. THE POSTSCRIPT (Psa. 72:20).

“The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” What more could he ask? He has climbed the

summit of the mount of God; he desires nothing more. With this upon his lips, he is content to die. He strips himself of his own royalty and becomes only the “son of Jesse,” thrice happy to subside into nothing before the crowned Messiah. Before his believing eye the reign of Jesus, like the sun, filled all around with light, and the holy soul of the man after God’s own heart exulted in it... “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!” We, too, cease from all petitioning if it be granted to us to see the day of the Lord. Our blissful spirits will then have nothing further to do but for ever to praise the Lord our God (Vol. 2, p. 232)

“Christ in the Old Testament”

Lesson 29

The Messianic Psalms – Psalm 96

November 3, 1997

Intro: (Express appreciation to Gary for taking the class on the last two Tuesdays.)

I want to consider with you today Psalm 96. I did not expect to include this with the Messianic Psalms we would be studying, but while Lucille and I were on vacation I read this Psalm and saw that the last verse clearly indicates that it is Messianic. Twice it is said in verse 13 that the Lord is coming, not to suffer and die, but to “judge the earth.” So this very clearly is millennial and Messianic.

Since it is my habit to read a Psalm every day, two days later I was reading Psalm 98 and was struck by the last verse of that Psalm which also speaks of the Lord coming to judge the earth. At first I thought that I might have read the same Psalm that I had read two days before, but then checking I found that these two Psalms end in almost the same way, and I saw that they were both Messianic.

After this I discovered that one man who has written on the Psalms (Arthur Clarke) claimed that Psalm 97, the Psalm between the two I have mentioned, is also Messianic (*Analytical Studies in the Psalms*, p. 361). And this is clear from the first six verses.

So we have here three Psalms together which are clearly Messianic. I do not plan to include Psalms 97 and 98 in our series because of their similarity with Psalm 96, but I will be referring to them as we go through Psalm 96, as I have already done.

As we begin, let us think for just a moment about the condition of the world today. And when I say “the condition of the world,” I am not speaking about the earth as such, but about the people who live on the earth. Never in our lifetimes has there been such widespread corruption. It is everywhere. You see it in the leaders of governments (including our own). You see it in our cities. It seems like every day we hear about somebody being murdered in Portland—and some days it is more than one. During our vacation we were up in northern Washington where we had access to Seattle TV stations, and they have the same problems up there that we have here. We hear of violence of all kinds, drugs, broken homes, even children being involved in crimes. And it is clear that things are out of control. It seems that it is impossible to stop it.

The ninety-sixth Psalm is a Psalm about singing and rejoicing. The same is true of Psalm 97 and Psalm 98. But when we look at conditions on the earth today, there is not much to sing about. But you will notice as you read these Psalms that there is an emphasis in these Psalms that is missing in life generally today. What is it? *It is an emphasis upon the Lord.* You will only find this emphasis today among the people of God, and sometimes it seems that the emphasis upon the Lord among us is not as strong as it should be. It is so easy for us to be influenced by the world in which we live that we need to be constantly on guard lest we lose our focus in these evil days in which we live. So it ought to be very helpful for all of us, and very encouraging, to spend our time this morning going through a Psalm like Psalm 96, and the support it is given in Psalms 97 and 98.

Let me give you a brief outline of Psalm 96 and then we will consider the message that it gives to us.

- 1) In vv. 1-3 we have an exhortation to *sing unto the Lord*.
- 2) In vv. 4-6 we are told *why* we should sing unto the Lord.
- 3) In vv. 7-9 we are called upon to *worship the Lord*. This is equal to the emphasis in verses 1-3.
- 4) Finally, in verses 10-13 we are told *why* we are to worship the Lord.

Now let us consider the Psalm section by section and verse by verse.

I. AN EXHORTATION TO SING UNTO THE LORD (Psa. 96:1-3).

The book of Psalms, being the hymn book of ancient Israel, confirms that singing is to be an outstanding characteristic of the people of God. The same is carried over into the church in the NT. We have, e.g., those verses in Eph. 5:19-20 following the exhortation to “be filled with the Spirit” which tell us that we need to be a singing people:

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20).

You have the same thing in Col. 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

But we do not just sing songs, or sing just for the sake of singing. We are to sing “unto the Lord.” Our singing is to glorify the Lord. It is to please Him. It is *for* Him Who is the reason for our joy.

And we sing “a new song.” Fausset mentions in his commentary on this Psalm that in the OT “a new song” was in praise for a blessing never before received (III, p. 309). We don’t sing the world’s songs; we have our own songs. And we started singing new songs when we were saved. And then we sing new songs whenever we experience a new blessing, or experience some deliverance from the Lord. It is not always a new song as such, but new to us, and we sing songs with new meaning and with new joy as we grow in the Lord.

We have a confirmation of this explanation of “a new song” in Rev. 14:1-3. Listen to what we read there:

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

You see, you had to have experienced what the 144,000 had experienced in order to sing their song.

The “new song” here in Psalm 96 is also a song concerning something that the Lord is yet to do which has never been done upon the earth, and it has to do with what will take place when He comes again. Then all of the conditions which prevail upon the earth today will be gone, and a new era will have arrived, and era of peace and righteousness throughout the whole earth. And so “all the earth” is called upon to sing this “new song” because there will not be a single part of the earth which will not enjoy the blessings of the Lord at that time.

Verse 2 begins with the exhortation to sing for the third time, and not just to sing, but to sing “unto the Lord.” His Name is to be “blessed,” or praised, because this is not something that the nations will bring about. Israel will not be responsible for the new conditions on the earth. Neither will the church. But the Lord will bring in this time of righteousness, and so to Him belongs all of the glory.

The singing can start now because the purpose of God expressed in this Psalm is so certain that we can sing to

the Lord with the absolute assurance that it will without any doubt whatever take place in the Lord's own time.

The same has to do with *showing forth the Lord's salvation from day to day*. And to "shew forth His salvation" is lit. *to preach the Gospel*. What the Lord will do in the earth when He comes is all of part of His marvelous work of salvation. And we as the people of God are to be singing that "new song," proclaiming that message, incessantly! We will be singing it more gloriously than ever before when the Lord returns, but we need to be proclaiming it constantly even now.

Let us ask ourselves if we are doing this. The Lord is continually giving us opportunities to tell others about our Savior, and we need to pray each day that He will give us the boldness to speak to others about the saving grace of our God.

Verse 3 goes on to emphasize how we should use our tongues, in singing and in speaking, to proclaim the truth to those who do not know the Lord. The glory of the Lord is the Lord. His glory speaks of His marvelous attributes. Most people have such a distorted understanding of Who the Lord is. We need to make the truth known among "the heathen." This word can be used interchangeably with "Gentiles" or "nations." Remember that this Psalm was originally addressed to the people of God in Israel. But they were not to keep the message to themselves. Instead, they were to be constantly proclaiming this glorious truth of the grace of God. The "all people" would be the nations of the earth. "His wonders" are those works of God which are beyond the ability of man, works which cause people to be amazed. And among God's greatest works is His work of creation. Men since the beginning of time have been trying to explain this world and the universe of which the world is a part. The best that they can come up with is the false theory of evolution. The simple explanation is given to us in the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

What a difference we would see under the blessing of the Lord if we would only open our mouths "from day to day," declaring the glory of the Lord and His wonders among the people that we have an opportunity to speak to.

This completes the first exhortation. The Psalmist then followed this with:

II. THE EXPLANATION AS TO *WHY* WE SHOULD SING UNTO THE LORD (Psa. 96:4-6).

Verse 4 gives as the first reason, "For the Lord is great." The second, "And greatly to be praised." The third, "He is to be feared above all gods."

When contemplating *the greatness of the Lord*, Who can possibly be compared with our God? He is a living God, as the Name Jehovah indicates. And it also indicates that He is eternal and unchanging. He is infinite in His wisdom, absolutely sovereign in His power, and perfect in His holiness (as Psalm 97 emphasizes). The Lord is incomparable in all of His glorious attributes. His grace is sufficient to save the chief of sinners. He is faithful even when we do not trust Him as we should. The things that are impossible with men (and there are many of them), are all possible with God. When Moses had led the children of Israel through the Red Sea which the Lord had opened for them, He led the children of Israel in singing,

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness fearful in praises, doing wonders (Ex. 15:11).

The more we understand the greatness of the Lord, the greater will be our praise. Our praise will be greater as to the time we give to it, and it will come from the depths of our hearts. The greatness of our God cannot possibly be overstated.

And because of Who the Lord is, “He is to be feared above all gods.” Why? Because, as we are told in verse 5, “For all the gods” (without exception) “of the nations are idols.” The margin of my Bible says, *things of nought*. They aren’t anything! They aren’t alive. They can’t see, nor hear, nor talk. They can’t walk. Wherever you set them, that is where they stay until you move them. They never made anything, but are themselves the work of men’s hands, so the men who made them are actually greater than the idols themselves. So when we go to “the heathen” to tell them about our God, we are not trying to get them to leave something that is good, but we are seeking to get them to turn from nothing to the Lord Who is the God of the heavens and the earth. He “made the heavens.” There is no one among men or angels who can do that.

Andrew Bonar (*Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*, p. 288) made this comment:

It is not angels that are invited to sing, though no doubt they will join in; it is a redeemed world—and the men of that redeemed world are to be telling of the salvation not for a few moments only, but from “day to day.” In telling the salvation, they are to tell chiefly the glory of Him who has wrought it out (ver. 1-10)—His wonderful doings, his greatness, his praise-worthiness, his fear, the nullity of all other gods, the creator-skill of our God who made the heavens.

Verse 6 completes the reasons for singing a new song unto the Lord. “Before Him” means in His presence. Always with the Lord are “honor” and “majesty.” Clarke mentioned that often in the Psalms the attributes of the Lord are personified as attendants in the presence of the Lord. (See p. 239.) The two statements of verse 6 are parallel to each other. “Honor” parallels “strength”; “majesty” and “beauty” go together. And from the phrase, “the beauty of holiness” in verse 9, it seems that we can assume that the Lord’s “majesty” and His “beauty” are His absolute holiness. There is nothing defiled nor defiling about our great Lord.

Now we come to the third part of the chapter, and the second series of exhortations, this time specifically having to do with worship.

III. AN EXHORTATION TO WORSHIP THE LORD (Psa. 96:7-9).

Notice how the Lord again is the focus of their worship, just as He was of their singing in verses 1 and 2. They were to “give unto the Lord” twice in verse 7, and once in verse 8. In verse 9 they were not just to go through acts of worship as is so often the case, but to “worship the Lord.”

In verse 3 “all people” had to do with the nations of the earth; here in verse 7 “ye kindreds of the people” refers to the redeemed of the nation Israel. They are “the people” in the OT, *the people of God*. It indicates that only those who are truly the Lord’s are capable of worshipping Him. Others may go through ceremonies and offer sacrifices of various kinds, but true worship can only be done by the people of God. We, as the Lord’s people, don’t actually give Him either glory or strength (two words which come out of verse 6, but we in our worship ascribe all glory to Him, and recognize that He is the source of all of our strength. Cf. Isa. 40:31.

Verse 8 – What glory, what honor, what praise, is “due” the Lord? The word is not actually in the original text, but the idea is there, and so the translators were justified in adding this word to make the text more readable and understandable. “His Name” is above every other name. No one is as deserving of our worship as the Lord. In fact, we are to worship only Him!

As a token of the people’s submission to the Lord, and their submission to Him, they were called upon to “bring an offering, and come into His courts.” Coming to His courts was in itself an act of obedience to the Lord because it was at Jerusalem and in the temple where the Lord had placed His Name. Often in Israel the people worshiped in high places, but true worshipers not only brought what the Lord had asked them to bring,

but they brought their gifts where the Lord wanted them to be brought.

And continuing the thought into verse 9, the people were to worship the Lord “in the beauty of holiness.” There is nothing that is more beautiful to God in the lives of His people than holiness! This is why it is so important that we examine our hearts and confess our sins before we attempt to worship the Lord. To “fear before” the Lord, does not mean that we come with what one writer has called “slavish fear,” as though we were afraid of the Lord, but we come before Him in reverence and awe, recognizing His infinite glory and our own unworthiness to be numbered among the people of God. This is addressed to “all the earth.”

It is sad to say that these qualities of true worship are too often lacking whether we come to the Lord in the quietness of our own homes, or meet together with the Lord’s people to “worship” Him. But it is always true that when we do worship the Lord “in the beauty of holiness,” and truly and humbly and penitently “fear before Him,” the blessing for us is so great that we wish that “all the earth” would know Him and worship Him, too.

Now we come to the last section of the Psalm in verses 10-13.

IV. *WHY WE WORSHIP THE LORD (Psa. 96:10-13).*

It seems that there is a present as well as a future interpretation that needs to be placed upon the words of this section. It has always been true, and always will be true, that “the Lord reigneth.” He is our sovereign Lord. He is not only sovereign over His people, but over all people, all nations, both men and angels. But there is also the truth that is very prominent in Scripture that *the Lord is coming to establish His kingdom on the earth and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords*. This message must be carried to the nations of the earth because this is truth that they do not know. Again we have emphasized the importance of verbal testimony. God works through preaching, i.e., the verbal proclamation of the truth of His Word. Fausset said that “the earth...has been shaken to its foundation by man’s sin... Peace shall universally supercede the present state of disorder” (III, p. 310). In Isa. 2:4 we read,

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Verse 10 says that the Lord “shall judge the people righteously.” What a difference the reign of our Lord will be from all of the kings, presidents, dictators, and all of the judges of the earth! Today this is where we see ever-increasing unrighteousness. But I believe that Bonar is right in what he said about this verse, quoting also from that great OT scholar and man of God, Hengstenberg. This is his quotation:

It is, as Hengstenberg says, “a gracious judging,” not a time of mere adjudication of causes or pronouncing sentences—it is a day of jubilee. It is [to be] the happiest day our world has ever seen. Who would not long for it? Who is there that does not pray for it? It is the day of the Judge’s glory, as well as of our world’s freedom—the day when “*the judgment of this world*” (John xii. 31, and xvi. 11), which his cross began and made sure, is completed by the total suppression of Satan’s reign, and the removal of the curse (*Op. cit.*, pp. 289, 290).

Verses 11 and 12 and 13 tell us how all of nature will rejoice “before the Lord” when He comes to judge the earth. This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote Rom. 8:18-25:

- 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
- 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
- 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath

subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. 8:18-25).

For the expression, “for He cometh,” to be repeated indicates the certainty of our Lord’s coming, according to Fausset (III, 311). For some it will mean weeping and gnashing of teeth. But for those who are redeemed, it will be the fulfillment of a hope that has been too long in coming. We have suffering now, but glory is on the way. Let us be assured in our hearts that this is true even though it seems so impossible now! The blessings that the redeemed will experience under the glorious reign of our precious Savior, will more than compensate for all of the trials and testings that we have experienced in this life. May the Lord Himself enable us to be faithful to the Lord as we await that glorious day!

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 30
The Messianic Psalms – Part 13 -- Psalm 110
November 10, 1997

Intro: The Lord Jesus Christ, late in His ministry, was confronted on one occasion by the Sadducees, and then by the Pharisees. They were always trying to embarrass the Lord in His teaching. But the Lord answered them without any difficulty. And then, while He had the Pharisees with Him, we have the following account of some questions that the Lord asked the Pharisees, and this session is recorded for us in Matthew 22:41-46. Perhaps you would like to turn to these verses while I read them to you.

- 41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
- 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.
- 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit [a reference to the Holy Spirit] call him Lord, saying,
- 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
- 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?
- 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

The Lord, of course, was referring to Psalm 110 which is the Messianic Psalm which I want to consider with you today.

It was generally understood by the Jews in our Lord's Day that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. The question that the Lord asked means, "What think ye of the Messiah? Whose son is He?" And they correctly answered, "The Son of David." And then the Lord in His response to them confirmed not only that David was the one who wrote Psalm 110, but also that He wrote under the personal direction of the Holy Spirit. This is a good illustration of what Peter was to write later when he said (and I am reading now from the NASB):

- 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.
- 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

King David wrote on that occasion as a prophet. And he was used by God to predict that the Messiah, Who was known to come from David's family, and so would be the heir to David's throne, would also be the Lord. He would be God in human flesh, the God-Man.

One of the reasons the Jews were so anxious to kill the Lord was because of His claim to be the Son of God, thus making Himself in His nature "equal with God." This is what the Apostle John wrote in John 5:18. Therefore, it was from their own Scriptures, and from King David himself, that the Lord confirmed to them that *the Messiah, the Christ, would be the Lord.*

So this gives us a good foundation for understanding that King David really did write Psalm 110, that he was directed by the Holy Spirit in what He said, and thus it confirms that the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, would be both God and Man! So, when you and I are asked the question, "Did the Jews expect the Messiah to be Deity?", on the basis of Psalm 110 and other passages, the answer is, "If they didn't, they should have!"

The Apostle Peter followed the example of our Lord when, on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, he also quoted in his message from Psalm 110. And this is what he said,

- 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.
- 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
- 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. [This is a reference to Psal. 16:10.]
- 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
- 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
- 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,*
- 35 *Until I make thy foes thy footstool.* [This is a reference to Psal. 110:1.]
- 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:29-36).

Derek Kidner pointed out in his commentary on the Psalms that this, Psalm 110, “is one of the most quoted of all the Psalms” (II, p 392). Every reference in the NT to the Lord Jesus being at the right hand of God, is traceable to Psalm 110. One of the verses in Hebrews 1 in which the writer was showing that our Lord was (and is) greater than angels, has this to say:

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? (Heb. 1:13).

God never said that to any angel, nor did He ever say that to any other person. Only the Lord has that exalted position. And what is He doing there as He waits until His enemies are made His footstool? We all should know the answer to that question. It is given to us in Rom. 8:34:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

So Psalm 110 is not only important as a Psalm which speaks of Christ, but speaking of Christ, it contains much for our comfort and the encouragement of our faith.

But now let us turn to the Psalm itself.

There is a very clear threefold outline to the Psalm:

- 1) The Messiah as King (Psa. 110:1-3).
- 2) The Messiah as Priest (Psa. 110:4).
- 3) The Messiah as Warrior and Judge (Psa. 110:5-7).

I. THE MESSIAH AS KING (Psa. 110:1-3).

Notice, if you will, that the letters used in the spelling of Lord in verse 1 are different. I have pointed this out to you before in other passages. The first is LORD; the second is Lord. Obviously David was referring to two Members of the Godhead. The first LORD is a reference to God, the Father; the second, to God the Son. The first is a translation of the Hebrew *Jehovah*; the second is from the Hebrews *Adonai*. And here David refers to the Messiah, not as “my Son” (as he well could have), but as “my Lord.” He was indicating that the Messiah even then was his Master, the One Who owned him, and before Whom he bowed in submission, reverence, and obedience. It is very important to notice this distinction, and we need to be grateful to the translators of the KJV for making this distinction even in the English translation. Always be on the lookout for the difference in the lettering of the word Lord in the OT. It is not that the Lord Jesus does not deserve the Name Jehovah,

because He does. But it is a nice way of showing that we have two Members of the Godhead in a passage like this, and it is followed by the direct quotation of what the Father said to His Son.

Fausset pointed out in the JFB series that the Hebrew word for “said” “is always used of a *Divine revelation*” (III, 346).

We know now that this statement has to do with our Lord’s present position with the Father in heaven. It portrays the work of the Messiah on the Cross as past, finished, and fully accepted by the Father—as we know it is now. The right hand of God is the place of honor, an honor which has always been reserved for the Son of God. And we can say that this verse pictures our Lord as our Mediator (as I have already brought out).

We have a revelation here of the sovereignty of God, and of the outcome of the present warfare that has been going on on the earth since the fall of man into sin. The outcome has never been in doubt, but it was secured forever by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul spoke of this in 1 Cor. 15, in verses 22 through 26:

- 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
- 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
- 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
- 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
- 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

This speaks of the time when the Lord will finally come to rule and reign upon the earth. He sits now upon an unseen throne in the heavens, at the right hand of the Father, but the day will come when He will sit upon His throne on earth, and all nations will be subject to Him. How wonderful that as far back as David’s time the Holy Spirit has given the people of God this assurance!

Fausset made the following interesting point:

The Hebrew, *until*, often marks a process continued up to a certain point... Messiah does not now *sit* inactive, but reigns...; though the fulness of His power is to be manifested at the millennium (III, 346).

In verse 2 LORD is spelled all in caps, and so in the light of what we learned in verse 1, this refers to what God the Father will do. He had said that He would make our Lord’s enemies His footstool. This does not mean that neither the Lord Jesus nor the Holy Spirit will have a part in this, but it does mean that the full power of God Himself will be behind the overthrow of every enemy of our Lord.

The “rod of Thy strength” is not a royal scepter, but it is a rod for punishment. In Psalm 23 we read that David said, “Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (v. 4b). The staff was to assist the sheep; the rod was to ward off wolves, bears, and all other enemies. So the rod here in Psalm 110 is to beat back, subdue, and to punish then enemies of our Lord. And it is exercised by divine strength. It comes from Zion, not heaven, but from Jerusalem which some day will be the capital of the whole world.

The book of the Revelation makes it clear that our Lord will “rule” with “a rod of iron.” See Rev. 19:15. Speaking of our Lord it tells us,

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

But remember also what we had in Ps. 2:9: “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” Moses’ rod which he used in Egypt is typical of the Messiah’s rod. The rule of

our Lord will be enforced by His mighty power, and all of the combined forces of the nations of the earth and the fallen angels will be no match for the sovereign power of our Lord.

To rule in their midst means that all around Zion, i.e., the whole earth, the sovereign and awful power of our Lord will be felt. Knowing how powerful the Lord is, should make us marvel all the more at His restraint and the grace with which He put up with His enemies when He came the first time.

Verse 3 indicates that the rule which must be *enforced* upon the Lord’s enemies, will be gladly received by His people. This is the day that we are all looking for. Throughout history the Lord’s people, and pre-eminently our Lord Himself, have been the victims. But not so in the day of our Lord’s power. We see evidences of His power from time to time now, but then it will be an overwhelming power that all of the world will be made to see.

The words “in the beauties (pl.) of holiness” and on to the end of the verse describe the people of God. Now the world despises anything that even resembles holiness, but then the saints of God will be seen in all their glory, in holiness—that which is the great delight of God. And as in the beginning of the day when the dew is upon the ground, the saints will be as the refreshing of the earth, eternal youth in their strength, and as numberless as the dew on the ground. As the Apostle Paul said in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans, all creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. This verse speaks of the time when the people of God will be seen in all of their glory, and the work of salvation will be completed in each one.

In verse 4 we come to the next division in the Psalm.

II. THE MESSIAH AS PRIEST (Psa. 110:4).

This is one of the most important verses in all of the Old Testament. Melchizedek appeared first, you will remember, in Genesis 14. He was both a King and a Priest. He was the King of Salem, which means *a King of peace*. But his name also indicates that he was *a King of righteousness*. He is mentioned in only three books of the Bible: Genesis 14, Psalm 110, and Hebrews 5, 6, 7.

Many believe that Melchizedek in Genesis 14 was an OT appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ—and that may be true. I am inclined to believe that he was a real king who appeared as a type or forerunner of our Lord. But whichever may be right, the end result is the same. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, both a King and a Priest, a King of peace and a King of righteousness. And this position which our Lord has, and which He one day will reveal, speaks of His majesty and glory. This is what He is now, but He will be seen as a priest after the order of Melchizedek for all eternity. Our Lord’s unique priesthood is guaranteed by the oath of Almighty God.

To get the whole picture concerning this great revelation which has its roots in the OT, and its full revelation is the book of Hebrews, would take a careful study of Hebrews 5, 6, and 7, especially chapter 7. We have an eternal High Priest Who by His death has guaranteed the eternal salvation of His people. I took this up last year when we considered Christ in Genesis 14, but let me simply read a few selections from those chapters in Hebrews so those of you who might not be familiar with this ministry of our Lord, will be able to appreciate how very wonderful this truth is. **(Read portions of Heb. 5, 6, and 7.)**

I think that it needs to be emphasized that this Psalm portrays our Lord at the right hand of the Father. It views the Cross as being in the past, and our Lord sits triumphantly in glory. His work has been fully accepted by the Father, and He awaits the day when His conquest of the earth will be final. Therefore, verse 4 of this Psalm

really anticipates the coming in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the oath of God, as I have said, guarantees His final victory on the earth. The last section of this Psalm has to do with that conquest, the final victory.

And so let us look at the final section of Psalm 110.

III. THE MESSIAH AS WARRIOR AND JUDGE (Psa. 110:5-7).

Notice that David is speaking (as he evidently has from verse 1 on), and the word, “Lord,” is not all in caps, so, as we learned in verse 1, this is a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. At this point David anticipates that the Lord has made His appearance at His second coming to the earth, and He has come not only as a King and as a Priest, but also as a Warrior and as a Judge (see v. 6 for this last title).

This takes us as to its truth into the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. For example, when we read of our Lord opening the sixth seal of the seven-sealed scroll, this is what the Apostle John had to say:

- 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
- 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
- 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
- 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
- 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
- 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:12-17).

In Psa. 110:5 it is predicted that the Lord Jesus Who is now at His Father’s right hand, “shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.” If you want to conquer nations, you go for the king! And that is what our Lord will do, *striking them through!* They have not realized that the power that they have exercised has been given to them by God, but when the day of the Lord’s wrath comes, that power which once had a great influence on the earth, will amount to nothing.

Notice from verse 6 that the Lord *judges*, and then He kills, and His judgment will extend “over many countries,” meaning over all of the nations of the earth. But we must remember that the Lord always judges in righteousness. He is a righteous judge. And He judges individually.

Revelation 20:11-15 tells of this judgment:

- 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
- 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
- 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
- 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
- 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

We all need to be reminded that there is only one way to escape the wrath of God, and that is by trusting in the

saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of John the Baptist recorded in John 3:36:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The Apostle Paul rejoiced over the people of God in Thessalonica with these words:

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

Judgment is coming. God is not only a God of love and grace, but He is also a God of wrath. His patience with men is amazing, but judgment is coming. Listen to the words we find in Acts 17:30-31:

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

We all need to make sure that we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that He did for sinners when He died on the Cross. To ignore the Gospel of God's grace is the greatest folly a person can commit.

The meaning of this last verse has left many at a loss to determine the right interpretation. But in the light of what we read in the two preceding verses, the best idea seems to be that the Lord will be so intent on completing the defeat of His enemies that He will only stop briefly to refresh Himself at the book so as to renew His strength for the final conquest.

Andrew Bonar explained it this way:

Most seem inclined to take *Gideon* as the type that best expresses the idea. Pressing on to victory, Messiah, like Gideon, "faint yet pursuing" [Judges 8:4] as he passed over Jordan, shall not desist till all is won. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He hath set judgment in the earth" [Isa. 42:4]. Perhaps the full idea is this:--His career was irresistibly successful, like that of Gideon; for he allowed nothing to detain him, nor did he shrink in the enterprise from any fatigue, nor did he stop to indulge the flesh (p. 334).

Concl: This Psalm beautifully pictures the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet at the same time it is a Psalm full of solemn warnings. Men today comfort themselves with the idea that God is *only* a God of love. But this is nothing but self-deceit of the worst kind. God is a God of love, infinite love, but He is also a God of righteousness and wrath. And those who either reject, or even neglect, His gracious offer of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, are certain to find out the full measure of God's wrath. May God grant that all of us have turn to Christ, and that we are trusting in Him, to deliver us from the wrath of God which is certain to fall upon sinners who reject the only way of salvation, and that is through Christ.

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 31
The Messianic Psalms – Part 14 – Psalm 118
November 17, 1997

Intro: Today I want to conclude our study of the Messianic Psalms. There are more Psalms which could be included, but I believe we have had enough, fourteen in all, to see how Christ is presented in the Psalms so that each of us can return to the Psalms and discover how others speak of Christ. Andrew Bonar, who wrote the book, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*, showed that Christ is referred to in one way or another in all of the one hundred and fifty Psalms. So we could continue on for many weeks to come. But I believe that we have covered the main Messianic Psalms, concluding today with Psalm 118.

You will be interested to know that this was Martin Luther’s favorite Psalm. So it might be called *the Psalm of the Reformation*. I will give you what he said about it when we come to the end of our study today.

Dr. Charles Feinberg, who was my Hebrew teacher at Dallas Seminary, gave this Psalm the title, *The Lovingkindness of the Lord*. He pointed out that its Messianic section, verses 22-26, picture our Lord’s “*glad reception by the Jews*” at His return to reign. (This information is found in Dr. Feinberg’s unpublished notes on the Psalms.)

There are many suggestions as to whom, when, and under what circumstances this Psalm was written, the most prominent being when the children of Israel returned to their land at the time of Nehemiah. Spurgeon thought that David was the writer. But the reference to “the gate” in verses 19 and 20 seems to be a reference to the entrance to the temple, and, if that be true, then the time of David would be eliminated.

It was written to commemorate a great deliverance, and very probably was used on many occasions when the people made a procession through the streets of Jerusalem toward the Temple. The Psalm has a happy ring to it. God had obviously given His people a great blessing, and in song they were praising Him for His goodness and His inexhaustible mercy.

The Psalm is written in the first person, but the Psalmist was obviously expressing the joy of all of the people at the work that the Lord had done on behalf of His people.

The Psalm has a twofold division:

- 1) The procession and praise on the way to the Temple (vv. 1-18).
- 2) The praise within the Temple (vv.19-29).

There are some interesting features of this Psalm which we need to notice.

This is the only Psalm which begins and ends with this same verse:

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever (Psa. 118:1, 29).

Psalms 105, 106, 107, and 136 begin with this verse, but they do not end with it (although the last verse of Psa. 136 is very similar. In 1 Chron. 16:34 we also find this verse where it appears at the beginning of the first twenty-two verses of Psalm 105 which are quoted in that chapter.

Notice also that the writer of this Psalm was very fond of repeating certain words:

- 1) Notice the similarity between verses 2, 3, and 4.
- 2) Notice “it is better” in verses 8 and 9.
- 3) Be sure to notice the word “compassed” in verses 10, 11, and 12.

4) Also in the same verses see the repetition of the phrase, “the name of the Lord.

5) In verses 15 and 16 we have “the right hand of the Lord” three times.

The Psalmist surely had a purpose in these repetitions which we will see as we go through the Psalm verse by verse.

So let us begin with the first point.

I. THE PROCESSION AND PRAISE ON THE WAY TO THE TEMPLE (Psa. 118:1-18).

The Psalm begins with:

A. The call to give God thanks (Psa. 118:1-4).

Jeremiah, during those times when things were at their worst, predicted that this would take place. Cf. Jer. 33:10-11:

10 Thus saith the Lord; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,

11 The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord (Jer. 33:10-11).

This was a prophecy which was to have a fulfillment after the years of captivity, but it also would have a future fulfillment in that day when the Lord will come to reign upon the earth. This is clear when we read on in Jer. 33, and compare it with Psa. 118.

This was an earnest appeal on the part of the Psalmist. God is to be praised because “He is good,” and His goodness is nowhere more apparent than in the exercise of “His mercy. For it to endure forever means that it is inexhaustible. This is not to make the people careless about their lives, but to give them hope when the miseries of disobedience fall upon them. Remember that mercy is for our miseries; grace is for our guilt.

Three groups are called upon the praise the Lord, and the three groups together make up all of the people of God wherever they might be. See the same in Psa. 115:9-11.

Israel, of course, is the nation of Israel. The House of Aaron would be the priests and Levites. But those who fear the Lord would include Gentiles wherever they might be throughout the whole earth. So we can even imagine that the procession must have included some redeemed Gentiles as well as Jewish believers. What a wonderful day that will be when the praises of the Lord ring throughout the whole earth!

Next we come to:

B. The Psalmist’s testimony that the Lord answered his prayer (Psa. 118:5).

All of the people would be singing, “I...” The meaning of this surely would be an indication that although the Lord had delivered the nation, yet every person in the nation was responsible to give praise to the Lord.

In the following verses we will see what the Psalmist learned during this time, and yet one very important point is given here in verse 5. He learned to his great joy that the Lord hears and answers prayer. One of the sins of

the children of Israel that had led to their captivity was that they were trusting in the nations around them, but not in the Lord. After they were taken captive, they had no one to turn to but the Lord, and they learned when they prayed that the Lord heard and answered their prayers. And what made the Lord’s answer so remarkable was that the people did not deserve an answer, and they knew it!

Along this line,

C. What else did they learn?

1. They learned that the Lord was on their side (Psa. 118:6-7).

Doesn’t this remind you of Heb. 13:5-6?

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The writer of Hebrews was quoting from Psalm 118:6 when he wrote those words. And this is a good example of how we need to apply the teaching of Scripture to our own lives. The Jews before the captivity had trouble in believing that the Lord alone was sufficient for their needs, and so the Lord brought judgment upon them to teach them this all-important lesson. “Covetousness” which is mentioned in Heb. 13:5 can often mean a desire for more than we have in the Lord, but if He is our Helper, and on our side, who else do we need? He alone can deliver us from fear.

But the Psalmist learned that there was another benefit to having the Lord on our side. The Lord raised up men to help them. Why was Cyrus so kind to the Jews? And why did Artaxerxes help Nehemiah? And what about Darius with Daniel? And there were many other lesser instances, for example, Rahab with the spies. The Lord was raising up help for His people, even among kings.

The words, “my desire,” in verse 7 are not in the original. They were added by the translators to complete what they thought was the Psalmist’s meaning. But reading the verse without those words is sufficient. It is all a question of how the Psalmist looked upon them. It was no longer with fear as it had been before, but he looked upon some of them as friends after what the Lord had done in their hearts, and how the Lord brought blessing through the very ones who had been their enemies.

And so the Psalmist learned a second very important lesson:

2. He learned that it was better to trust in the Lord (Psa. 118:8-9).

Whether just a common man, or princes with all of the power at their command, it was better to trust in the Lord. This does not mean that the Lord does not use men to help us. In fact, the Psalmist had just said that He does. But it means that even though help may come through men, we know that ultimately it has come from the Lord, and so it is better, so very much better, to have our trust in Him.

And this leads to a third lesson. Here we come to the multiple use of the words “compassed” and “the name of the Lord,” in verses 10-12, and also “the right hand of the Lord” in verses 15 and 16.

3. He learned how very powerful “the name of the Lord” is, and how mighty is “the right hand of the Lord” (Psa. 118:10-16).

Derek Kidner says that the word “compassed,” which means *surrounded*, speaks of “the ring of foes.” Humanly speaking it was impossible to escape their foes. Many came at once, or one came after another (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, and so on). In fact, the Psalmist said, “All nations.” That is the position that Israel is in at this very moment. The final victory has not yet been won. If “all nations” surround the people of God, then, of course, they were in a situation where if the Lord did not help them, no one else would. So they had no choice. What a blessing it can be from the Lord when we are put in situations where we realize that our only hope is in the Lord! But what power there is in “the name of the Lord.”

David gave us an evidence of the power of “the name of the Lord.” When he faced Goliath, this is what he said:

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

And you know what the outcome was.

But in verse 12 we see how invincible men can seem at times. The nations had the Lord's people surrounded like “bees” and like “the fire of thorns”—both uncontrollable. Kidner said that these expressions were used to “bring out the unnerving closeness and the fury of the attack” (II, 414).

Spurgeon said this about the bees as representing the enemies of Israel:

They seemed to be everywhere, like a swarm of bees, attacking him at every point; nimbly flying from place to place, stinging him meanwhile, and inflicting grievous pain. They threatened at first to baffle him: what weapon could he use against them? They were so numerous, so inveterate [constantly bad]; so contemptible, yet so audacious; so insignificant and yet so capable of inflicting agony, that to the eye of reason there appeared no possibility of doing anything with them... They threatened to sting a man to death with their incessant malice, their base insinuations, their dastardly falsehoods (III, 106).

But the things that are impossible with man, are possible with God. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Our God is El Shaddai, the All-Mighty God, but it often takes being put in impossible situations for us to learn how mighty our God is!

Three times, in verses 10, 11, and 12, the Psalmist said, “But,” or “For, in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.” Instead of great fear (which normally is the case), we see great faith!

At this moment the Psalmist seems to have been reminded of Israel's deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and so he sang some of the first words of the Psalm which Moses led the children of Israel in singing, and to which the women under Miriam's leadership responded antiphonally. This is repeated again in Isa. 12:2:

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky,
Angels and men before it fall;
And devils fear and fly.

But not only is their power in “the name of the Lord,” but also in “the right hand of the Lord,” mentioned three times in verses 15 and 16. And at this point the song of praise becomes also a song of victory, and the whole victory is attributed to “the right hand of the Lord.”

Twice it is said that “the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.” Once, “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.” “Valiantly” means *strong, able, efficient*. It makes no difference who the enemy is, nor how numerous they may be, the Lord alone is able to vanquish the mightiest foe on earth, or in the heavens. To say that “the right hand of the Lord is exalted” probably means here that it is lifted up. All three statements mean not just that the Lord has a right hand, but that He uses it to defend His people.

In Moses’ song to which reference is made in verse 14, there are also two references to the right hand of the Lord. So the Psalmist here must have had the whole Psalm in mind. Let me read the verses from Exodus 15 which speak of the Lord’s right hand:

Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy (Ex. 15:6).

And then in verses 11 and 12 we read:

11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them (Ex. 15:11-12).

And finally as the Psalmist approached the Temple we see:

B. His strong confidence in the Lord (Psa. 118:17-18).

Again we must think of the nation even though the Psalmist expressed himself in the first person.

Haven’t you often been impressed in reading through the OT prophets at the way in which the Lord so strongly pronounced judgment against His people, threatening them with the sword, famine, and pestilence, only to find Him saying afterwards that He would not completely destroy the nation, but would restore them to His favor? I believe that is the sense here. The people were under the judgment of God. The opposition of the nations seemed to spell doom for Israel, and it would have if it had not been for the fact of the mercy of the Lord. We sing about “Amazing Grace.” But we also ought to sing about “Amazing Mercy.” Jeremiah, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said it as well as it can be said,

22 It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD (Lam. 3:22-26).

The first part of this Psalm (vv. 1-18) teach us that we must always remember to do two things when we experience the blessing of the Lord:

1) We need to praise Him (Psa. 118:1).

2) We need to tell others what the Lord has done for us (Psa. 118:17).

At this point the procession has reached the Temple, and so we are ready to enter through the gate.

II. THE PRAISE WITHIN THE TEMPLE (Psa. 118:19-29).

The fourteenth verse of this Psalm shows that the emphasis upon the work that the Lord did for the Psalmist (and for the people of Israel), was not just physical, a physical deliverance from enemies, from the nations, but a spiritual work had been done as well. When the Lord finally restores Israel to Himself when He comes, the same will be true. The Lord not only redeem them from all of their enemies, and from all nations wherever they have been scattered, but He will do a spiritual work in their hearts. He will give them hearts to know Him. He will write His Word upon their hearts. The Lord will become their salvation.

So as we see the Psalmist coming to the gate of the Temple, a great change has taken place in him. His heart has been cleansed, and this gives him boldness to enter into the Lord’s presence—because the Temple was the dwelling place of the Lord, and nothing unrighteous was ever to be brought before Him. Even the gates are “the gates of righteousness.” And it is his purpose to deliver His praises directly to the Lord. This is what we learn in verse 19. And in verse 20 it is re-emphasized that there only “the righteous shall enter.” And this means not only those who have a righteous standing with God, but those who are righteous in character and in life. And verse 21 gives us the subject of his praise. (Read.)

And then, coming to verse 22, we come to the Messianic section of this Psalm.

Graham Scroggie says in his commentary on the Psalms:

There are no fewer than six reference to this in the New Testament, and three of them, the parallel references in the Gospels, are made by our Lord Himself, and of Himself (Matt. xxi. 42; Mark xii. 10, 11; Luke xx. 17; Acts vi. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Peter ii. 4:7).

The Gospel references are given in connection with the parable that the Lord told of a man who planted a vineyard, and then “let it out to husbandmen.” When he sent to them to get some of the fruit, they mistreated his servants, beating some up and driving them away, and actually killing others. Finally he sent his son, thinking that they would respect him, but they killed his son also thinking that they would then inherit the vineyard. The Lord was portraying His own rejection by the nation Israel. And so He said to the husbandmen,

Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Matt. 21:42).

The householder represented God. The son of the householder represented Christ. The husbandmen were types of Israel. And so the Lord was predicting His own rejection by the nation, but also His ultimate acceptance. But it would not be accomplished by the Israelites acting on their own. It would be as the Lord said, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” “Marvelous” means *amazing, that which causes men to wonder*.

In Psa. 118:22 “the stone” is the Messiah. “The builders” are the leaders of Israel. They “refused” “the Stone.” But contrary to what they wanted, and contrary to what they ever thought would take place, that Stone has become “the head stone of the corner,” or the chief cornerstone. How did it happen? “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa. 118:23).

And the time when this will take place will be when the Lord returns. And this is “the day” that is spoken of in verse 24. (Read.) SO THE REJECTED ONE WILL BECOME THE ACCEPTED ONE, not by every Jew, but by the chosen ones in Israel. What a day that will be!

As we look at Israel today, such a prospect seems totally unlikely, doesn’t it? And it would be if it were dependent upon the people of Israel themselves. But it is “the Lord’s doing.” It will take place on “the day that the Lord hath made,” the day of His appointing. We don’t know when that will be, but we know for sure

that it will take place. And we can rejoice now in anticipation of it.

Verse 25 is a prayer for the fulfillment of this prophecy. This "prosperity" of which the verse speaks is the good, the profit, the blessing that the people of Israel will experience when their Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes to reign upon the earth. The Psalmist himself was ready for it. It is like the Apostle John prayed at the end of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Israel is where she is today because she has refused her Messiah, and she will never have her blessing restored until she say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Psa. 118:26). (Refer to this phrase, "the name of the Lord" in verses 10-12.) This is what the people cried when the Lord made His entry into Jerusalem. See Matt. 21:9. But that was not the fulfillment of this prophecy. Instead, the Lord's judgment was pronounced upon Israel when He said the words that are recorded for us in Matt. 23:37-39:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

In verses 27 and 28 we have further evidence of the time when Israel shall acknowledge the Lord as her Messiah and King.

The change from "LORD" throughout the Psalm to "God" indicates still further that the change that has come about has been the work of the Lord. He "hath showed us light." Cf. Isa. 9:2:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

And to those words we can add the words of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 11:

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:25-36).

And to these words we add the final word of our Psalm. It ends as it began:

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever (Psa. 118:29).

Concl: As I began today I promised to give you what Martin Luther said about this Psalm. It is given by Graham Scroggie in his book on the Psalms. This is what Luther said:

Luther dedicated his translation of this Psalm to the Abbot Frederick of Nuremburg, and in the dedication he said: “This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all; I love all Holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine. It has saved me from many a pressing danger, from which nor emperor, nor kings, nor sages, nor saints could have saved me.

It is my friend; dearer to me than all the honors and power of the earth... But it may be objected that this Psalm is common to all; no one has a right to call it his own. Yes; but Christ is also common to all, and yet Christ is mine. I am not jealous of my property; I would divide it with the whole world... And would to God that all men would claim this Psalm as especially theirs.”

With the exposition of this Psalm, which Delitzsch calls Luther’s noblest jewel, his defence and his treasure, the great reformer occupied himself in the solitude of his Coburg Patmos.

“Christ in the Old Testament”

Lesson 32

Christ in Isaiah – Part 1 – Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7

November 24, 1997

Intro: We concluded our study of the Messianic Psalms last week, and I want eventually to include the other books that come in the section of the Old Testament which are called, *the books of Poetry*. In addition to the Psalms, these books are Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. But I have not had the time to get into these books like I want to, and so I am going to postpone our study of those books, and go directly to the prophetic books. So today I want to begin with *the prophecy of Isaiah*.

However, before we get started with Isaiah, let me take a few moments to point out the division of the books of the Old Testament. Probably most of you are familiar with these, but it will be good for all of us to review them. And it may be that some are not familiar with these at all. They are as follows:

- 1) The books of the Law, often referred to as the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Pentateuch means five books, or five scrolls, or five tools.
- 2) The books of History: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
- 3) The books of Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
- 4) The books of Prophecy:
 The Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
 The Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

So this means that:

- 1) In the books of the Law we have *five books* (5).
 - 2) In the books of History we have *twelve books* (12).
 - 3) In the books of Poetry we have *five books* (5).
 - 4) In the Major Prophets we have *five books* (5).
 - 5) In the Minor Prophets we have *twelve books* (12).
- And this makes a total of thirty-nine (39) books in the OT.

The books of prophecy are not listed in the order in which they were written, but the longer books are separated from the shorter books. So the terms “major” and “minor” do not indicate importance, but size. Isaiah was placed first because it is general considered to be the foundational book of the OT prophets. Romans occupies that place in the NT. It was not written first, but an understanding of Romans is basic to understanding the other epistles of the NT.

The book of Isaiah is divided into two parts:

- 1) Judgment (1-39).
- 2) Redemption (40-66).

It is easy to remember these because they correspond to the books of the Bible: 39 books in the OT; 27 books in the NT. The main Messianic passages are in the latter part, but some are in the first part.

This book is sometimes referred to as *the Gospel of Isaiah*, just as in the NT we have *the Gospel of Matthew*, etc.

And so today I want to begin with the prophecy of Isaiah. We will not be able to finish this in one lesson because there is so much of Christ in this great prophetic writing.

During my seminary days one of my teachers was Dr. Harry Ironside, who for many years was the pastor of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. He was also what they called a *visiting Bible lecturer* at Dallas Seminary. In his book on Isaiah, Dr. Ironside had this to say:

Many professing Christians pay little or no attention to the prophetic word, but in neglecting that which formed so large a part of the Holy Scriptures, they wrong their own souls and dishonor Him who gave His Word for our edification and comfort. *The real value of prophecy is that it occupies us with a Person, not merely with events. That Person is our Lord Jesus Christ who came once to suffer and is coming again to reign. Of both these advents Isaiah treats, and that in a way more plain and full than do any of the other Old Testament seers* (p. 5, italics mine).

Let me read to you what Merrill Unger wrote in his *Bible Handbook* (p. 307) about Christ in Isaiah:

Of all the prophetic books of the OT Isaiah is the most Messianic: even more so than the book of Zechariah. Only the Psalms contain a larger number of Messianic predictions. Every glory of our Lord and every aspect of His life on earth are set forth in this great evangelical prophecy: His Deity, eternity, preexistence, creatorship, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, incomparableness (40:12-18; 51:13); His incarnation (9:6; 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:23); His lowliness and youth in Nazareth (7:15; 9:1-2; 11:1; 53:2); His appearance as the Servant of the Lord, anointed as such (11:2), and chosen and delighted in as such (42:1); His mild manner (42:2); His tender ministering kindness (42:3; Matt. 12:18-20); His obedience (50:5); His message (61:1-2); His miracles (35:5-6); His sufferings (50:6); His sufferings as the gateway to His exaltation (52:13-15); His rejection by the Jewish nation (53:1-3); His shame-struck, wounded, bruised (53:4-6); His vicarious death (53:8) and burial (53:9); His ascension (53:13); His spiritual progeny (53:10) and present high priestly ministry (53:12); His future glory. After ch. 53 Messiah is not mentioned again as the Servant of the Lord, and His coming glory centers more into focus (59:20; 63:1-6; 66:15-19).

So you can see that in this book alone there is a lot of teaching about Christ for us to consider. And I trust that our time spent in this great prophecy will not only increase our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, but will cause us to love Him more than we ever have.

And so to begin, I ask you to turn with me to Isa. 7:14.

I. ISAIAH 7:14. (Read.)

We all should be well acquainted with this prophecy because it is one which we hear every Christmas season. It has to do with the birth of the Messiah. And this is confirmed by the quotation of it in the NT. Please turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew, 1:18-25:

- 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
- 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.
- 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
- 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name

Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS (Matt. 1:18-25).

I feel sure that most of you are familiar with the battle that has been waged for many years over this passage, the liberal theologians saying that this is not a prophecy of the coming Messiah, but simply a prediction that Isaiah and his wife were to have a son which was to be “a sign” to Ahaz confirming God’s promise to him that the two kings mentioned in Isa. 7:1 would not be able to conquer Judah. That part was certainly true because we read in Isa. 8:1-4 we read of the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. And he was “a sign” to Ahaz that Isaiah’s prophecy was true.

However, the first chapter of Matthew confirms to us that the prophecy given to Ahaz was also a prophecy of the coming Messiah. There is no question about that. So what do we have here. We have what is called by Bible teachers and theologians a prophecy of *double reference*. *It applied immediately to a son that God would give Isaiah, but it extended to some 700 years later to the Son Who was given to the virgin Mary. And the Spirit of God deliberately chose a word which could mean either a young married woman or a virgin of marriageable age.* And it meant the former in Isaiah’s case; it meant the latter in the case of the birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary.

The Bible is its own best commentary, especially since we know that no man, whoever he might be, could have predicted the nature of the birth of the Messiah, if he had not been directed by the Holy Spirit to speak and to write as he did. That is what Isaiah did. It was revealed to him by the Spirit of God that the coming Messiah would be born of a virgin.

It has to be that way, otherwise if Joseph had been the father of Jesus, then He could not have been the Son of God, and would have been a sinner just like every other human being. But in this statement, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,” shows that this One would be a true human being. But the second part of the prophecy shows His Deity: “And shall call his name Immanuel.” Any Jew would know that Immanuel means, *God with us*. So there you have His Deity, God and man together in one person.

So we must not pay any attention to those who would tell us that Isa. 7:14 is not a prophecy of the birth of the Messiah. It was! And it gives us a very clear revelation of the nature of our Lord—that He was both God and Man in one Person, the Son of Mary and the Son of God. And His Name is called Immanuel to show us that in becoming Man He did not cease in any sense of the word to be God. He was truly a Man, and truly God! And any person who does not believe that is not a Christian. He may be a theologian and a seminary professor, but if he denies the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, he cannot possibly be saved. The Apostle John made this very clear when he wrote,

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:1-3).

We have that other grand declaration by the Apostle John which is recorded for us in John 1:14. After saying at the beginning of his Gospel that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God" (John 1:1), then the Apostle John went on to say in John 1:14,

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The use of the title, "the Word," in both of these verses, indicates that all that our Lord was in the beginning when He was with God, and was God, He was still all of that when He became flesh.

But let me add this also. Isaiah 7:14 was "a sign," a proof of the truth of Gen. 3:15, a verse which we considered at the beginning of our studies of "Christ in the Old Testament." Let me remind you of what that verse said. It records the words of God Himself as He spoke words of judgment to the serpent..

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

The Lord Jesus Christ came as "her seed," *the seed of a woman*, not of a man! So from the very beginning of the Bible we have a prophecy of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us go on now to a second passage. It, too, is very familiar, and very important. It is found in:

II. ISAIAH 9:1-7. (Read.)

Now to relate this to our Lord, the Messiah of Israel, please turn with me to Matt. 4 where I will read verses 12 through 17:

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:12-17).

Now this passage confirms two things about Isaiah 9:

- 1) That Isaiah was uttering a prophecy concerning our Lord Who is the Light, the Light of the World, the only Light.
- 2) That the light had to do with the preaching of the Gospel.

The passage speaks of a great battle, and of a great victory which will be won by the Person described in verses 6 and 7. Verse 5 probably is a prediction of the Battle of Armageddon which is mentioned in Rev. 16. And in verses 6 and 7 of Isa. 9 we see a further confirmation of the nature of our Lord plus the eventual glory of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can be sympathetic with the disciples of our Lord who refused to think that He was going to have to die when in passages like this we have our Lord's first coming linked with His second coming. But this verse seems to indicate that they are one coming. But let us examine these verses.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." This confirms with some added light the prophecy which we had in Isa. 7:14. "A child is born," speaks of His humanity; "a Son is given," speaks of His Deity. As God our Lord Jesus Christ had not beginning. He is the eternal Son of God. But we have these two natures again

joined in the same Person. The present tense is used to show the certainty that this will take place. The Lord's coming in Isa. 7:14 was “a sign”; here, it is a gift, and fits in with a verse like John 3:16, “For God so love the world that He gave...” And we know that the Father gave His Son, not because we deserved such a gift, and certainly not because we, or anyone else, had requested it. But He gave His Son because of His great love which He had for those whom He would redeem. He was in a unique way, born to die, to die as the Savior of sinners.

“And the government shall be upon His shoulders.” You see, we pass very suddenly here from our Lord's first coming to His second coming. It is a characteristic of Biblical prophecy to bring together events which are chronologically separated. So we can see now that there are already almost 2,000 year between the first part of this verse and the second.

The shoulder is expressive of strength, power, and authority. This ties in with the last statement of verse 7: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” The governing authority of our Lord will include the whole earth, every nation on the face of the earth. We read in 1 Cor. 15:24-26,

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;
when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The Lord possesses sovereign authority now. This is what He told His disciples in the words we find in Matt. 28:19-20. But at His second coming then it will be evident that He has sovereign authority when He will become King of kings and Lord of lords. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:13-16:

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

And so the government of all of the earth shall rest upon Him.

And then it is that Isaiah was led to give us His Name (note the singular):

- 1) “Wonderful Counsellor.”
- 2) “The mighty God.”
- 3) “The everlasting Father.”
- 4) “The Prince of Peace.”

Delitzsch made a precious comment about the names given to our Lord in these two passages that we have had so far. He said, “In ch. vii. it is the mother who names the child; here it is the people, or indeed any one who rejoices in Him” (I, 248). It is wonderful to see the faith of Mary predicted 700 years before our Lord was born, but also to see the contrast in the hearts of the people. When He came the first time, they refused to submit to Him. Instead, they crucified Him. When He comes the second time it will all be different. Then men will bow before Him, acknowledging that He is the “wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

All of these make up the Lord's “name”—note that it is in the singular. It is similar to what our Lord said in commissioning His disciples to baptize disciples “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Just there it showed *the oneness of the Godhead*, so here it indicates that all of these names belong to the Lord, and only to our Lord, and they are His at one and the same time, regardless of what the time might be. It is interesting that our Lord was never called by the names given here, nor by the Name given to Him in 7:14. Nevertheless, in His teaching and in His life ministry there is no question but that all of these Names belong to Him.

Let us consider what they mean.

First, “Wonderful,” or should it be, “Wonderful Counsellor? Expositors differ on this question—some say they should be considered separately; others combine them and so make them in form like the other three. Even though in Judges 13:18 the Angel of the Lord is called, *Wonderful* (see the margin), yet I prefer to bring “Wonderful” and “Counselor” together, making it that our Lord’s Name is, *Wonderful Counselor*. There is no capitalization, nor punctuation in the original, and so we are left to our own judgment, under the leading of the Spirit, as to what the meaning is.

There is no question but that our Lord was a Counselor, the greatest of counselors! The people were continually marveling at His teaching. Even the officers of the Jews said, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). Even when the Lord was only twelve years old, Joseph and Mary found him in the Temple with “the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46b). And then Luke recorded this statement, “And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47).

And in this connection think of what the Apostle Paul said in Rom. 11:33-36:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

And we read also in 1 Cor. 1:23-24,

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Too much can not be said about the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord since He is *omniscient*!

Second, “the mighty God.”

Here is a declaration of His Deity, and also that as God He is powerful. We know that as God our Lord is *omnipotent*! There is nothing too hard for Him. When the Lord made the wind stop blowing, and then made the sea calm, His disciples said, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (Matt. 8:27). And in what we call our Lord’s Great Commission, He began by saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). When the Lord was teaching about how hard it was for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God, the disciples then asked, “Who then can be saved?” (Luke 18:26). And the Lord responded by saying, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

And so the Gospels are full of illustrations that Jesus Christ was not only God, but that He was “the mighty God.” Cf. John 1:1, 14; 5:17-18.

Third, “the everlasting Father.”

This is a strange Name to be given to our Lord since we are taught to consider that the first Person of the Godhead is our heavenly Father. But this Name declares that our Lord is actually *the Father of eternity*. It not only declares the eternal nature of our Lord, but it also “designates Him...not only as the possessor of eternity (Hengstenberg), but as the tender, faithful, and wise trainer, guardian, and provider of His people even in eternity” (Delitzsch, I, 253). All that a true father should be to his children, our Lord is to His people, and He will be throughout eternity.

Fourth and finally, our Lord is here called, “the Prince of Peace.”

Cf. Isa. 57:15-21 where the “Lord’s eternity and His provision of peace are combined” (Vine, p. 44). This is what that passage tells us:

- 15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.
- 16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.
- 17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.
- 18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.
- 19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.
- 20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
- 21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isa. 57:15-21).

Our Lord’s sovereignty is declared again in the word “Prince.” And as “the Prince of Peace” it is, as Delitzsch has commented (I, 253), that He “removes all peace-disturbing powers, and secures peace among the nations.” Cf. Zech. 9:9-10:

- 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.
- 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

But we need to remember that the peace that our Lord gives, and over which He has sovereign control, is not just an outer peace, a world without war, but an inner peace, peace of the heart, *a perfect peace!* Cf. Isa. 26:3-4:

- 3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.
- 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Now let us look at Isa. 9:7. (Read.)

Here we learn about the government which the Messiah will establish upon the earth. There will be no boundaries, no limitations, at all to the kingdom which our Lord will establish. He will inherit the throne of His father, David. He will “order it,” which means that He will set it up. Not only that, but He will “establish

it,” which means that He will sustain and maintain it, supporting it by His almighty power. And this will be “with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” Delitzsch refers to “judgment” and “justice” as the pillars upon which the Lord’s kingdom will be established, and it will never change. The Lord’s judgments are what He decrees. They will always be right. And the justice is *righteousness*, which will always characterize our Lord, and which He imparts to those who are in His kingdom. How different this will be from any government which has ever existed on earth from the beginning of time. Governments now are permeated with evil. Decisions are rarely just. And the leaders are continually and increasingly corrupted by the power that they possess and which they exercise.

But how will all of this come to pass? “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” The people of God do not bring this about. It is accomplished and made permanent by “the zeal of the Lord of hosts.” This is what we learned in the second Psalm. (Read.) In spite of all that the nations have done and will do to thwart and change the purposes of God, God, by His mighty power will prevail. “Zeal” is actually *jealousy in action*. The nations during the Great Tribulation will have as their objective the complete annihilation of God’s chosen people. But then God will step in, and by His jealousy for His elect in Israel upon whom He has set His love, He will set His King upon His holy hill, Zion, which is in Jerusalem, and the Lord will then become the King, and the Lord will fulfill all of the promises that He has given to His earthly people.

Concl: What glorious truth there is in these verses! And how encouraged we should be to read and to believe what they tell us! Think of it: These prophecies were revealed 700 years before Christ came, confirming other prophecies which were given in the Garden of Eden. And today, almost 2,000 years after our Lord’s mission to the earth, believers everywhere still confidently look forward to the return of the Savior, not to die again, and not in humiliation as before, but coming as King of kings and Lord of lords, and to establish a rule of righteousness on earth which will be “from henceforth even for ever.” This should make us more determined than ever to live to please the Lord, and to declare our faith in the certainty that there are others who will believe the Gospel and who then will confidently look forward to the coming of our Lord.

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 33
Christ in Isaiah – Part 2 – Isaiah 11, 12
December 1, 1997

Intro: We have considered the two first major Messianic references in Isa. 7:14 and 9:6-7. The next major passage includes two chapters: Isa. 11 and 12. As we might expect, the foundation for these two chapters is in chapter 10. There in verse 5 we are told about the Assyrian which the Lord called, “the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand [Assyria’s hand] is mine indignation. Isaiah was a prophet to Judah, and although Assyria only captured the northern nation of Israel, but not Judah, yet Assyria threatened Judah, and is probably considered here as the nation which initiated the judgment of God, followed by Babylon, the Medo-Persia, and so on.

Although chapter 10 holds out hope for the Lord’s people (cf. 10:20-23), and so the last verses (from verse 24 on) the devastation of the enemies of God’s people is likened to the destruction of a forest. We know from 2 Kings 18 and 19, as well as from Isaiah 36 and 37 (which is almost identical with 2 Kings 18 and 19) how the Lord destroyed the forces of the Assyrians so that they were not able to capture Judah as they had captured Israel. (Read portions of one of the above passages.)

However, chapter 11 begins by telling us that Judah herself had been reduced to nothing more than *a stump!* But we read in the first verse of Isa. 11 that “there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” This “rod,” this “Branch,” is the Messiah! So out of an apparently hopeless situation the Lord will bring about the fulfillment of His purposes for Israel through the coming of the Messiah. And this will be His coming in glory.

Now let me give you an outline for these two chapters:

- 1) The Messiah described (11:1-5).
- 2) The effect of His coming upon the earth (11:6-9).
- 3) The regathering of Israel (11:10-16).
- 4) The Psalm of praise (12:1-6).

I. THE MESSIAH DESCRIBED (Isa. 11:1-5).

I believe that we have to say that we have a reference in verse 1 to the first coming of our Lord. The word “rod” could be translated, *a twig*. The word “Branch” means just *a shoot* or *a sprout*.

Charles Briggs, in his book, *Messianic Prophecy*, made this comment:

The invasion of Judah by the Assyrians was the occasion of the prediction of the wonderful shoot. The Assyrian was the rod of Jehovah’s anger. He continued to afflict Judah until the nation became a mere stump in the ground. Then Assyria, having served the divine purpose, will perish. But the stump will put forth a shoot that will be fruitful and abide forever (p. 202).

Jesse, you will remember, was the father of David, so here we have the royal line referred to. And our Lord Jesus according to the flesh was the son of Jesse and the son of David, thus giving Him royal rights to the throne of Israel. But I say that this refers to our Lord’s first coming because no one pays much attention to a shoot sprouting out of a stump. It is an indication that there is still life in the stump, but any prospect for a great tree would be so remote that it would not be worth even a comment. However, this stump is different. This is the nation Israel, which by the grace of God still had life, and the sprout coming out was the evidence of the coming of Israel’s King and Messiah.

"Branch" is the title given to the Messiah also in two passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Listen to what they tell us. In Jer. 23:5-6 we read these words:

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

And these a very similar prediction is found in Jer. 33:15-16:

15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Even though the word that Jeremiah used for "Branch" is different from the word which Isaiah used, yet the meaning is the same, *a sprout* or *a bud*.

The birth of Jesus Christ was, for the most part, unnoticed and insignificant as far as Israel was concerned at the time, and, with the exception of the wise men who came from the east, our Lord's birth passed unnoticed and unknown!

But verse 2 begins to tell us that this "rod," this "Branch," was a very unusual Person. In fact, there never had been one like Him, nor will there ever be another.

The word "spirit" used throughout verse 2 should, of course, be capitalized, because it refers to the Holy Spirit. This, too, first took place during the earthly ministry of our Lord. Following the baptism of our Lord, we have this record concerning what John the Baptist said that he saw:

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him (John 1:32).

And then Luke tells us that as the Lord began His public ministry that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," and there "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all" (Luke 4:14, 15). So we should not be surprised to read in Isa. 11:2 that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." It would seem that all of our Lord's ministry on earth was done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

After mentioning the Holy Spirit, then Isaiah went on to show some of the effects which the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of believers. In the case before us in connection with the humanity of our Lord, the Holy Spirit produced these characteristics in our Lord. This is a great mystery to us because we know that whatever the Holy Spirit had, our Lord had, and whatever the Holy Spirit could do, our Lord could do. They were equal in their Deity. But it apparently was a part of the humiliation that our Lord experienced when He became a Man that He needed this ministry of the Holy Spirit within Himself.

The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding." The first seems to mean that the Lord innately had the ability to discern the nature of things even through just their appearance. "Understanding" had to do with the ability to discern the practical things which needed to be done.

The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of counsel and might." "Counsel" speaks of the ability to devise a plan and to direct it; "might" is the power to carry the plan out.

The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." In this connection it speaks of the superior and infinitely perfect knowledge that the Lord Jesus had of God, the Father; "the fear of the Lord" speaks of the trust, the reverence, that the Son had for the Father, plus His desire to always do that which was

pleasing to God.

In verse 3 we see how the Spirit of the Lord enabled the Lord to do what He did in His public ministry, as well as enabling Him to teach what He taught. And so we read that the Holy Spirit “shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.” The Hebrew of this statement gives the thought that it was always that which was pleasing to God which was fragrant, delightful to our Lord. In fact, that was all that He was really concerned about. This is the very essence of true wisdom and understanding—to see things as God sees them, and to do things His way, and not our own.

Consequently the Lord was not limited the way we are. We judge things according to what we see, and/or according to what we hear. And so, consequently our decisions are wrong, and our advice is not what is according to the will of God revealed in the Word of God

Verses 4 and 5 tell us what was true of our Lord on more of a local way when He was here the first time, and what also will be true of Him on a universal basis when He comes again.

Notice the contrast in this verse. It begins with the poor and the meek, and concludes with the earth and with the wicked. “The poor” does not necessarily refer to those who are poor with respect to money, but those who are weak and helpless, and so, as is often the case, in a position where everyone is inclined to take advantage of them. The Lord without exception will deal with them in righteousness. And “the meek,” the humble, the meek, and the lowly, and often afflicted, the Lord will “reprove with equity” the meek of the earth. The Lord will always be fair, righteous, straightforward in His decisions concerning them. He will never take advantage of them just because they are defenseless.

“On the other side of the coin,” so to speak, the wicked will be punished. No excuses will be accepted before the Judge of all the earth. People will not be able to avoid punishment because of their upbringing, or their background. What a terrible day that will be for all of the wicked of the earth. Judgment in full measure will fall upon them. God is a God of mercy, grace, and love, but He is also a righteous God who cannot look upon sin, who hates it, and will eventually rid the earth of it. Note how powerful are the words in the latter part of verse 4. (Read.)

In verse 5 the word “girdle” is used twice. The girdle was a belt, or band, around the waist which held the clothes together and in place. All that the Lord is, all that the Lord says, and all that the Lord does, are held in place and always under the control of His righteousness, and His faithfulness. And so Delitzsch said,

Consequently with Him there commences a new epoch, in which the Son of David and His righteousness acquire a world-subduing force, and find their home in a humanity that has sprung, like Himself, out of deep humiliation (I, 284).

So the hope of the world rests upon the spotless character of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are always recognized in that which is right in God’s sight, and that which is being faithful to Him.

Now we come to the second point in the chapter.

II. THE EFFECT OF SIN UPON THE LOWER CREATURES TO BE REMOVED (Isa. 11:6-9).

The Apostle Paul wrote of this time in his epistle to the church at Rome. We find them in Rom. 8:18-23:

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

- 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
- 20 For the creature [creation] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,
- 21 Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
- 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.
- 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Since the days before the fall, such a scene has never been witnessed upon the earth. And this will probably be more perfect than that was; for one reason, because creation and the creatures will never again be corrupted. But the Apostle Paul has set the time for us in a general way. It will have to wait for “the manifestation of the sons of God,” or, to state it another way, until we experience “the glory that shall be revealed in us.” This speaks of the time when we will have been changed into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is anything I hate to see it is animals killing other animals to get their food. That is one of the curses of sin. But the curse is to be removed, and then you will see what is described here in verses 6-9. (Read.) This will be during the millennial reign of our Savior.

Notice how little children are brought into the picture. Between people and animals there could be no greater contrast. Animals such as wolves, leopard, etc., are characterized by deadly power; children, but complete helplessness, and absolute dependence upon their parents. But in verse 6 we are told that a little child shall lead a young lion. And then in verse 8 we read of “the sucking child,” which in Bible times was anything from an infant to approximately three years old. The “asp” was probably a cobra, or some member of the adder family. Whatever it was, it was deadly poisonous. “The weaned child” would be slightly older than “the sucking child,” but still very young. He will then will be able to “put his hand on the cockatrice’ den,” without any possibility of being harmed or killed. This was probably what we know as a viper which the dictionary says is also a member of the adder family, and includes such snakes as the rattlesnake, the copperhead, and the water moccasin. This is a change which today would be thought impossible, and which we would not believe if it were not a part of the Word of God.

But notice verse 9 in particular.

The OT prophets spoke of kingdoms as mountains. We have already been told in the first part of chapter 11 that the reign of our Lord will be holy. So His kingdom will be holy. And one evidence of that holiness will be that no animal shall either “hurt or destroy in all of” our Lord’s “holy mountain.” What a marvelous day that will be! People and animals, birds and fish, will be able to go anywhere at any time without ever being concerned that they will be *hurt* or *destroyed*. And the reason which is stated here? “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Briggs wrote:

The knowledge of Jehovah covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, so that there is not only universal peace, but universal personal acquaintance with God (p. 205).

W. E. Vine is right in telling us not to make this symbolic. This is to be literally fulfilled, as difficult as it may be for us to realize it now. But what ought to be even more difficult for us to believe that this earth, from east to west, and from north to south, will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah. Think how little is known of the Lord now. There are millions of people who deny that there even is a God! But in that day when our Lord comes to reign upon the earth, beginning at the Lord’s “holy mountain,” Israel, and spreading throughout the

whole earth, the knowledge of the Lord shall be everywhere!

John Calvin made a very interesting statement on this verse. He said,

With good reason does the Prophet ad, that this invaluable blessing flows from *the knowledge of God*; for it abases all flesh, and teaches me to commit themselves to his trust and guardianship, and brings them into a state of brotherly harmony, when they learn that they have the same Father. (Mal. ii. 10.) Although many, who have not yet been renewed by the Spirit of Christ, profess to have humanity, yet it is certain that self-love...reigns in them; for in all it is natural and so deeply-rooted that they seek their own advantage and not that of others, think that they are born for themselves and not for others, and would wish to make the whole world subject to them if they could, as Plato has judiciously observed. Hence arise fraud, perjury, theft robbery, and innumerable crimes of this sort; and therefore there is no other remedy for subduing this lawless desire that *the knowledge of God*. We see how the Prophet again makes the government of Christ to rest on faith and the doctrine of the Gospel, as indeed he does not gather us to himself (Eph. i. 10) in another way than by enlightening our minds to reveal the heavenly life, which is nothing else, as He Himself declares, than *to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*.

David’s words in Psalm 22 sound very much like these words from Isaiah which we have been considering. Listen to what he said in Ps. 22:23-31:

- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.
- 29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.
- 30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

And we have Jeremiah’s words in Jer. 31:31-34 about the new covenant:

- 31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
- 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:
- 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

And Zechariah had this to say:

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one (Zech 14:9).

Righteousness and peace can come, as Calvin said, except through the knowledge of the Lord, not just a mere intellectual knowledge, but a personal and experiential knowledge. Whenever people turn from the Lord, violence and tragedies of all kinds result. And it is only by turning to the Lord that the hearts of people can be changed. Humanism leads to the worst kind of inhuman behavior; righteousness is only possible through "the knowledge of the Lord."

But now let us look at the third part of this chapter.

III. THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL AND PEACE AMONG THE NATIONS (Isa. 11:10-16).

"A root out of Jesse" takes us back to verse 1 and "a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Fausset says that it is "a root out of a shoot." But, as in verse 1, it speaks of the Messiah. He "shall stand [permanently] as an ensign for the people. Since the Gentiles are mentioned next, "the people" stands here for *the Jewish people*. "An ensign" is *a banner on a pole*. Jews and Gentiles will seek Him, our Lord Jesus Christ. And so this will mean another remarkable change when people universally will be seeking the Lord, and finding Him.

"And his rest shall be glorious" means that the Messiah will settle down in the manifestation of His glory. He came in humiliation as a Man to suffer and die the first time; He will come the second time "in power and great glory" to rule in righteousness and faithfulness upon the earth. Our Lord spoke these words while He was here on earth:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

Notice the expression, "in that day" in verse 11. It refers to *the day of the Lord*. And we will come to that again in the Psalm which will be sung "in that day." Cf. Isa. 12:1, 4.

This speaks of a second regathering. The first was from Babylon, and was a literal regathering. And so the second will also be literal, but will be far more extensive than the first one was. Cf. Isa. 43:5-7:

5 Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;
6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;
7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Also, Ezek. 37:21-28:

21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:
22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:
23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they

have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

24 And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

The Lord will gather His people from Assyria and Egypt, the nations who were the two great powers during the time of Isaiah. Pathros was Upper Egypt. Cush was Ethiopia or possibly the southern parts of Arabia. Elam was the area occupied by the Medes, and Shinar was the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Hamath was Syria, and “the islands of the sea” refers, as Delitzsch said, to “the islands and coast-land of the Mediterranean, together with the whole of the insular continent of Europe” (I, 289). It could also be a reference to the rest of the world. Wherever the elect remnant is, they will be regathered to their land and to their Lord Who will be their “Ensign.”

Verse 12 continues to describe the regathering. It will include the Gentile nations, “the outcasts of Israel” (the northern kingdom, and “the dispersed of Judah” (the southern kingdom).

In verse 13 we see that there will be peace between Israel (represented by Ephraim), and Judah. Ephraim will not longer be jealous of Judah. Those nations which have persecuted Israel will be destroyed. And Judah, who is by no means blameless, will no longer “vex,” *cause distress to*, or *act with hostility* toward Ephraim.

So the picture we have from these verses is of the people of Israel scattered among what we now know to be the Arab nations, and even with great conflict within the nation itself. Implied in all of this is the projection of some very difficult days ahead for the people of Israel. The Great Tribulation will be a time when Israel will be practically friendless among all of the nations of the earth. But then the Lord will come to redeem His own.

Verse 14 tells us that the situation “in that day” will be reversed. Then Israel will be the supreme power, and those who once were supreme over Israel, will become the subjects of Israel’s power in that day. Delitzsch spoke of them as “the warlike Philistines, the predatory nomad tribes of the East, the unbrotherly Edomites, the boasting Moabites, and the cruel Ammonites” (I, 290).

In addition, verse 15 explains to us what the Lord will do to the bodies of water which make travel in and out of the land of Israel so difficult. “The Egyptian sea” is the Red Sea. “The river” mentioned in this middle of verse 15 is the Euphrates River. The Lord will dry up the Red Sea, and He will split into seven streams the great Euphrates River so that people will have no trouble crossing the streams. They will be able to walk through them with no difficulty at all. That which would have been impossible before, was made easy by the mighty power of the Lord.

But this is not all.

Verse 16 tells us that there will be “an highway for the remnant [the elect] of His people, and they will make

their way out of Assyria just as they did in the earlier history of their nation when the Lord delivered them from the land of Egypt. And all of this is accomplished by the mighty power of the Lord. The exodus from Egypt was an indication that there is nothing too hard for the Lord, and that there is no nation, nor any grouping of nations which can possibly stand against the Lord.

Now what remains?

IV. THE PSALM OF PRAISE (12:1-6).

Just as the children of Israel sang their Psalm of praise to the Lord after their deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, so when they and the redeemed of the Gentile nations are redeemed following the Great Tribulation, again the Lord will be praised.

In verse 1 of this Psalm, the reference to the Lord being angry with them, is a reference to the time of the Great Tribulation. But at this point the Lord's anger is turned away, that is, it has ceased. And the Lord has comforted His people with the blessing of salvation.

In verse 2 the people profess their faith in the Lord, and sing again a part of the Psalm that the people sang when they had crossed the Red Sea, and then had seen the Lord destroy the Egyptian army. The first two verses of Ex. 15 give us these words:

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him (Ex. 15:1-2).

So the Psalm in Exodus 15 was prophetic of the final deliverance of the elect of Israel from their enemies, but especially from their sins.

A week ago last Sunday night, the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day, I expounded this twelfth chapter of Isaiah, and my subject was, A THANKSGIVING DAY TO COME. And this is what Psalm 12 is. I pointed out then that the two times we have the expression, "in that day," we have the twofold division of the Psalm. The difference is that in the first three verses we see the joy of the Lord people as they express their delight in the Lord. In the last three verses the people are being told what they should do. And it all has to do with the exaltation of the Lord. The evidence that people have been redeemed is seen in the fact that they worship the Lord, and speak of His ways, not their own.

"The Holy One of Israel" is a Messianic title. It has been used four times in Isaiah up to the point: 1:4;5:19, 24; 10:20. And it is used twenty-three times in Isaiah's prophecy afterwards, making a grand total of twenty-eight times! It is clearly the keynote of Isaiah's prophecy. Israel repeatedly had lost sight of the holiness of God. Isaiah's call in chapter 6 was to emphasize this with him, and to make him see his own uncleanness as well as the uncleanness of the people to whom he was called to minister. There are times when Isaiah may have used this of God, the Father, but it is predominantly a title of our Lord. And beginning with the reign of Christ upon the earth, that fact, that He is "the Holy One of Israel," will be impressed upon the hearts of the redeemed of Israel and the nations as never before.

May the Lord enable us to rejoice in Him as the words of this chapter have expressed it, and may we delight to declare the works of the Lord and to make His Name known and exalted in these evil days in which we live.

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 34
Christ in Isaiah – Part 3 – Isaiah 24-27
December 8, 1997

Intro: In the prophecy of Isaiah, we have in the first thirty-five chapters, a section of Scripture which deals primarily with judgment: God’s judgment upon Israel in the first twelve chapters, and then God’s judgment upon the Gentiles in chapters 13 through 23. He wrote of Babylon, Moab, Philistia, Damascus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Edom, Arabia, and finally, Tyre.

But, as I mentioned in one of our earlier lessons, in this extensive part of Isaiah’s prophecy, we not only have judgment, but also predictions of blessing and hope for the Gentiles. The first twenty-three chapters of Isaiah remind us that the prophets of God were primarily *preachers*. But they were also enabled by God to predict the future. And so we see hope mingled with the judgment. We have predictions of blessing which can only be fulfilled through the Messiah’s reign, but the passages describe primarily the conditions of our Lord’s kingdom on earth, but not the King Himself, except, as we have seen, in a few instances.

But when we come to Isaiah 24, we see the prophets in his prophetic role. However, here he is not concerned with the nations in the vicinity of Israel, *but with the whole earth. And it is a picture of total desolation!* And, if you let your eye run down to the end of the chapter, and verse 23, you will see that “the Lord of hosts” is reigning upon the earth, “in mount Zion and in Jerusalem.” And then in chapters 25 and 26 and 27 we see the unrestrained joy that the redeemed in Israel have in their reigning Messiah.

This all follows in sequence what we have in our Lord’s Olivet Discourse. Let me read to you from Matthew 24, beginning with verse 15 and going down through verse 31. (Read.)

Notice what the Lord said about this time of Great Tribulation:

- 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
- 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened (Matt. 24:21-22).

Many of us who are using the same Bible reading plan for the year have just finished reading the prophecy of Daniel. In the first three verses of the last chapter to Daniel, we have these words:

- 1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.
- 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
- 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. 12:1-3).

These passages are all speaking about the same period of time. This is what we have in these chapters. This is what we can call, “The worst of times.” The prophet Isaiah was able, through the Holy Spirit, to project his hearers and his readers to the very time of the end. Now let us consider what he had to say.

Beginning with Isaiah 24, we have first:

I. THE DESOLATION OF THE EARTH (Isa. 24:1-12).

Notice that we have “the earth” in verse 1. In verse 3 we have “the land”—which very likely is a reference to *the land of Israel*. And then in verse 4 we have “the earth” two times, and “the world” once. So there is a reference here to Israel and to the whole earth. And this desolation is what is described for us in Revelation 1 through 18.

Verse 1 tells us that this is a sovereign act of the Lord, and the picture is one of utter desolation. The earth will be emptied, not completely, but greatly depopulated. To be “scattered abroad” means that there will be a great dispersion, and undoubtedly has to do especially with the people of Israel.

Verse 2 tells us that no one will escape.

Verse 3 is a warning that God’s word is true, and that what God says He will do, He will do! Prophets and Apostles have warned of judgments to come, and this is one of them.

According to verse 4 it will be a time of great sorrow. Members of families will die, and others will be separated from each other. The earth will fade away, meaning that that which men have boasted in, will be disgrace, brought to shame and to nothing. To languish means to mourn, and there will be much of this at that time, especially among the “haughty,” perhaps proud in one sense, but mainly those of the upper class. Money will help no one in those days of such great suffering.

Verse 5 tells us about the moral condition of the earth which is actually the reason for the judgment. It is a judgment which will have been long overdue. The people of the earth have polluted it. We hear a lot today about the pollution of our waterways, and the pollution of our air, but, while many are concerned about the moral pollution of the day, which is the worst kind of pollution, the pollution that leads to other pollution, yet very few seem to be interested in the solution to our moral and social ills, which is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How have people polluted themselves and others? *By their violations of the Word of God.* People think that they can get away with anything that they want to do, but they are going to find out some day that they haven’t gotten away with a single thing. God keeps very complete records of the behavior of all men. And this is what Isaiah went on to say in verses 6 through 12.

Note the word “therefore” in verse 6 which indicates that all that follows is the result of man despising the Word of the Lord! We see this every day in our country. Our moral corruption is destroying us as a nation. We close our eyes to the wrongdoing of our leaders as long as jobs are plentiful, and the stock market keeps going up, and we have a lot to do to enjoy ourselves. We sometimes wonder how it can get worse, but it can! And it will! Remember verse 3b, “the Lord hath spoken His word.”

Going on in verse 13 we see that while all that we have read about so far is going on, there will be a time, or perhaps times, of:

II. PREMATURE REJOICING (Isa. 24:16-20).

George L. Robinson, in his book called, *The Book of Isaiah*, wrote,

The prophet fancies he hears songs of deliverance, but alas! they are premature; more judgment must follow (v. 16 (p. 100).

“The shaking of the olive tree” and “the gleaning grapes” seem to give people some hope, but, as we go on reading we realize that this was mercy on God’s part, but that it did not mean a change from the judgments that were coming on the earth.

Verses 14 and 15 seem to indicate how widespread the anticipation of relief can be, but, because the hearts of the people remain unchanged, the judgments must continue.

It could be, as there usually is in times of trouble, such as war or depression, that many people appear to turn to the Lord, and this was what Isaiah was visualizing about that time of tribulation, but so often it amount to nothing, and whenever the trial is over they go back to their old ways and to their sins. In which case, judgments not only come back, but they become more intense.

Or it might be that Isaiah was enabled to look ahead to see the glory for Israel, and that he was anticipating those songs of joy and redemption, but then he realized that the judgments were not at an end, but more was to come.

Whatever the situation here might have been, it was as Dr. Robinson said, “premature.” It all sounded good, but it was not yet to be.

Verse 16 gives us the contrast between what the people would say as compared with what the prophet was saying. Some were singing songs glorifying the righteous, but Isaiah was saying,

My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously (Isa. 24:16b).

Isaiah was lamenting for the people their leanness, that they were wasting away. And yet always in the midst of the worse kinds of judgments we know that people continue to go on cheating and taking advantage of other people. Isn’t one of the biggest problems in a devastating storm, the looting that goes on? People can be dying, but they will not turn away from their sins and turn to the Lord. Isn’t that right?

In verse 17 the prophet warned the people about “fear” and “the pit” and “the snare.” And then he showed in verse 18 how they are related to each other. Fear causes them to flee, and as they flee, they fall into the pit. And if they manage to get out of the pit, it is only that they might be taken in a snare. “Fear” is caused by a sudden alarm which causes terror. A “pit” is a large hole which is used for catching animals. A “snare” is a metal trap which springs closed upon a person, from which he cannot escape. It suggests progressive penalties. If people do not pay attention to their fears, they will only fall into a pit trying to escape. And if they manage to get out of a pit, they will be caught in a snare from which they will not be able to escape.

Verses 19 and 20 tell us that nothing has changed. These two verses read like verses 3 and 4 and 5, only worse! (Read.)

The word “transgression” speaks of sin as *a revolt*, or as *a rebellion against God*. In spite of many outward evidences of a change, the hearts of the people remain the same, even under the heavy judgments of God. How this proves that God is perfectly righteous in bringing these terrible judgments, never seen before as terrible as they will be in the Great Tribulation.

However, verse 21, while summarizing what the Lord has done, yet we have here:

III. THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHANGE (Isa. 24:21-23).

Note again the expression, “in that day.” It refers to *the Day of the Lord* which includes both the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Reign of Christ on the earth.

Previously, in verse 2, we have been told about God’s judgment upon the people and the priest, the servant and his master, the maid and her mistress, the buyer and the seller, the lender and the borrower, and the taker of usury and the giver of usury. Now here in verse 21 we are told about “the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.”

Dr. Ironside felt that “the high ones...on high” will be “the wicked spirits in the heavenlies.” That is, Satan and all of his innumerable demons. And I believe that he was right. After all, doesn’t Eph. 6:10-13 tell us that they are the ones we battle with?

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13).

It is unthinkable that the Devil and the demons would not want to take advantage of all of the judgments that the Lord will bring upon the earth so as to make a bad situation much worse.

But “the kings of the earth” will be affected too. This would apply to all national leaders: kings, presidents, dictators, etc. They never have been known for their godliness. Thank God, there have been some, but they have always been in the minority. But during the Great Tribulation they will suffer just like anyone else did. Remember that in the plagues of Egypt Pharaoh suffered right along with the rest of them, even losing his firstborn son in death. God is not respecter of persons, and the kings who are higher will have farther to fall.

Verse 22 tells what will happen to those who have been mentioned in verse 21. They will be “gathered together,” “shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited.”

But the good and great part is described in verse 23. He we have the Second Advent of our Lord, “the Lord of hosts” Who “shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” This is not a reign in heaven, but on the earth and it will be preceded by signs in the heavens. Remember Matt. 24:29-30:

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Who are our Lord’s “ancients”?

I can’t be dogmatic about this, but it refers to *older ones*. Could it be that this will be when the OT saints will be raised and glorified? I wouldn’t be surprised. We shall have our glorified bodies by that time, and we will reign with Him. *This may be the first gathering of all of the people of God from the beginning of time.* The NASB translates the last phrase of verse 23, “And his glory will be before His elders.” Perhaps this is the OT version of, “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). To see Him is to be made like Him, and to be made like the Lord is to be glorified. This may be the meaning of this verse as the Great Tribulation is brought to an end with the appearance in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This verse shows that while God, the Father, is the Lord of hosts, the title also belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. So here again we

have “Christ in the Old Testament,” in this case, Christ in Isaiah.

Now we are in a position to understand the place that Isaiah 25, 26 and 27 have in relationship to chapter 24. They comprise what we can call *a great hymn celebrating the return of the Lord*, or *a series of songs* which will be sung when the Lord returns to the earth to reign

ISAIAH 25-27: THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S RETURN.

I. THE CELEBRATION INTRODUCED (Isa. 25:1-5).

From the beginning of chapter 25 and on to the end of chapter 27 we see the joyful praise of the redeemed of Israel following the coming of the Lord. The chapters are actually tied together by the expression of *praise* in 25:1, followed by the statement in 26:2, “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, and then the singing continues in chapter 27 according to what we read in 27:2. This whole section speaks of the joy that will fill the hearts of the people as they view prophetically what will take place after the Lord returns in glory. Thus we are concerned in these chapters with the praise of God's redeemed people following the terrible time of the Great Tribulation.

In verse 1 of this chapter we have a prophetic picture of what the redeemed people of Israel will finally recognize in the One Who has come to reign over them. (See 24:23). They not only sing of the Deity of the Messiah, but they joyfully claim Him as their God! And, having recognized Who He is, they immediately begin to praise Him for what He is. The “I” here is collective of the whole nation which has been united under the authority of their King.

To exalt Him is *to lift Him up above all others*. And this is because the people will know then that there is no one like Him, no one who is greater than He is, and therefore, no one else who is worthy to be praised. And then will begin an eternity of praise which the people of Israel will continually offer to the Lord.

Why do they praise Him, their Lord, God, and King? First, because of what He has done, and then because of His Word.

“For Thou hast done wonderful things.” This is not primarily looking back over Israel's history, but what Our Lord will then have just done. “Wonderful things” are miraculous things, things which the people had thought were impossible, things which will make them wonder and marvel at their Lord. More of this will be said in verses 2 and following.

“Thy counsels of old” is a reference to the Word of God, the plans that He had announced in His Word from the beginning (“of old”). For the first time the people will be able to see that all that God had planned, and then declared through His prophets, had come to pass. His Word is declared to be “faithfulness and truth.” These are two words which both have the idea of faithfulness, but the first with the idea of absolute certainty. God is always faithful to His Word. His plans were never in doubt. And at this point the people were recognizing how unreasonable and how foolish was all of their unbelief. Remember this all follows the second coming of our Lord.

Perhaps this has been one of Isaiah's verses which you have memorized, and which you have used to praise the Lord even today. Although it speaks of the redeemed of Israel, this is a testimony that the people of God can give to the Lord regardless of what the time might be. God has done and is always doing “wonderful things,” and His Word, and His faithfulness to His Word, ought to be the subject of praise from all of us every day that

we live.

When we come to verse 2, just as the “I” in verse 1 was the collective expression of a nation united under the Messiah, so the reference to “a city” here is collective, referring to all cities which will have been a threat to the people of God. If this were to happen today, it would include Bagdad, Damascus, Teheran, Moscow, and all other nations on the earth which have been hostile to Israel. Gentile power will have been completely demolished! And not only that, but Gentile power is broken forever. We know that at the close of the Millennium, the nations of the earth will rise again against the Lord, but it will be short-lived. Revelation 20:7-10 tells us,

- 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
- 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
- 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
- 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

“A heap” is a *heap of stones*. It speaks of cities being reduced to rubble. All of the sophisticated defense systems of the cities will amount to nothing! They will be totally and permanently ruined. They and their people will be as though they had never existed. That which will remain will be completely worthless. What amazing words these are in the light of the glory and power of the Gentile nations today!

And yet we must take verse 3 with verse 2 because there will be those among the nations that will know the Lord, people who will glorify the Lord, and fear Him. “The strong people” are the same as “the terrible nations.” These are Gentiles. How mighty is the power of our Lord, the Messiah, Who will destroy Israel’s enemies, all of them, and yet, at the same time, claim an elect people for Himself from among them. Thus He will be not only a Conqueror, but more than a Conqueror, in that He will turn the hearts of many of His enemies toward Himself. And so these redeemed Gentiles will join with the redeemed of Israel in glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. And this will mean the fulfillment of Phil. 2:9-11:

- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
- 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
- 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Verse 4 gives us further reasons for the way in which our Lord will be glorified in that day.

“For Thou has been a strength to the poor,” etc. Delitzsch has described in very vivid terms the meaning of this verse:

Jehovah has proved Himself a strong castle..., a shelter from storm, and a shade from heat..., so that the blast of the tyrants...was like a wall-storm, *i.e.*, a storm striking against a wall..., sounding against it and bursting upon it without being able to wash it away...because it was the wall of a strong castle, and this strong castle was Jehovah Himself (I, 438).

And, of course, Jehovah here is the Messiah, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 5 concludes this part of the Song that the people will sing.

Again quoting from Delitzsch, this is how he translated verse 5:

As Jehovah can suddenly subdue the heat of the sun in dryness..., and it must give way when He brings up a shady thicket..., namely of clouds..., so did He [or, will He] suddenly subdue the thundering...of the hordes that stormed [will storm] against His people; and the song of triumph...of the tyrants, which passed [will pass] over the world like a scorching heat, was [will be] soon “brought low” (*Ibid.*).

With verse 5 the first part of the Psalm of Praise is concluded, and the prophecy which was abruptly stopped at the end of chapter 24, is resumed and continued to the end of chapter 25.

II. THE PROPHECY RESUMED (Isa. 25:6-12).

This is a continuation of the prophecy which was temporarily stopped with the last verse of Isa. 24. The Song at this point takes on more of a positive note, although the last three verses of the chapter continue to show how Gentile power will be brought to an end when the Lord comes to redeem his people.

We should remember that there have been times when the Lord has miraculously delivered His people in the past, but the deliverance spoken of here, while typified by past deliverances, was never made to the extent that the Lord will deliver His people when He comes to reign upon the earth.

Note the expression, “in this mountain.” It is found three times in this chapter, and nowhere else in the OT. Cf. vv. 6, 7, 10. The “mountain” is Zion (see 24:23) which will be the seat of the Lord’s reign upon the earth. And this is not speaking of heaven, but of Zion on earth, a part of the ancient city of Jerusalem. The term “mountain” is a familiar figure of speech in the OT, and especially with the prophets, for *a kingdom*.

December 15, 1997

Lesson 34 continued.

Continuing with verse 6 of chapter 25, we know from the OT Scriptures that famine and the scarcity of food was always an evidence of God’s displeasure with His people, a judgment from God. And so the abundance that is spoken of here is evidence of God’s blessing. It is for “all people,” evidently meaning the redeemed from the Gentiles as well as the Jews. And the things that are mentioned here are not the necessities of life, but that which is over and above. This speaks of great abundance. “Wine on the lees” is wine that has been kept for some time until all of the impurities, the dregs, have settled to the bottom, making the wine the best that there is.

But what is mentioned in verse 7 is even better than an abundance of food. It speaks “of spiritual blindness, like the ‘veil’ upon the heart of Israel mentioned in 2 Cor. iii. 15” (Delitzsch, I, 440). I will read 2 Cor. 3:13-16:

13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

What a glorious day that will be! Zechariah spoke of this day when Israel will realize that the One they had a part in crucifying was indeed their Messiah. Do you remember those great words in Zech. 12?

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn (Zech. 12:9-10).

And what does verse 8 remind you of? Why, of course, 1 Cor. 15:54. The whole context of 1 Cor. 15:54 is important:

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

The Apostle Paul was not speaking of the same time that Isaiah was speaking about, but they were both speaking about the same great doctrine: the resurrection of the saints. But all saints will not be raised at the same time. We will be raptured when the Lord comes in the air, and at that time “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). But there will be another great resurrection when the Lord comes to reign upon the earth. The Lord swallowed up death in victory by His own resurrection, but the people of God are to share in that victory when those who have died are raised, and when those who are alive when He comes, either in the air, or to the earth, and they are changed. And the certainty that we have that this will take place, is that “the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. 25:8).

And when the Lord comes, verse 9 is how His people will greet Him. This verse is very similar to verse 1, but verse 1 is in the singular; verse 9 is in the plural. Twice in verse 9 it is said that they will say, “We have waited for Him.” I believe that Delitzsch was right when he said that this waiting went back to Jacob who said, “I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord” (Gen. 49:18). And Heb. 11:10 we are told that even Abraham, Jacob’s grandfather, “Looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” And it is true according to what they will sing “in that day,” that the Lord saves, and then we need to “be glad and rejoice in Him and His salvation.

Salvation for Israel will not only mean salvation for their souls, but salvation from their enemies which have been brought against them as a judgment from the Lord. So that “in this mountain” (v. 6) where the blessing of the Lord shall be so evident, “the hand of the Lord will rest” (v. 10). That is, it comes down to deliver and to preserve His people, and as evidence of the mighty care which the Lord exercises over His people, Moab, who had such great contempt for Israel, with all of her power, “shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.” Those nations which have taken such pride in their power, will find that all that they gloried in will be nothing when the Lord moves against them.

Verse 11 continues to tell of the complete subjugation of the nations at the hand of the Lord. There are two ideas among commentators regarding verse 11. One is that the swimmer is God; the other is that the swimmer is Moab. And the majority take the swimmer as Moab. The idea of straw trodden down for the dunghill (in verse 10) is that of a manure pit, which certainly was not suitable for swimming. But it pictures Moab doing

everything possible to escape, as a swimmer would swim for his life, but the Moabites are completely unable to escape from God. Verse 12 speaks of the Lord's complete victory.

I think that we would have to say that Moab is representative of all of the Gentile nations who have opposed Israel. Not one will survive the judgment which the Lord will bring upon them.

The first song is concluded at the end of chapter 25, and immediately we have a second song in chapter 26. Some consider it a second part, or possibly the third part, of the song in chapter 25.

Chapter 26.

The main subject of the chapter is PEACE. There are four sections to this chapter:

- 1) The chapter begins by an encouragement for the righteous to continue to trust in the Lord (vv. 1-4).
- 2) There is a contrast drawn between the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked (vv. 5-11).
- 3) The Lord is exalted for all that He has done for His people (vv. 12-18).
- 4) The chapter closes with what is either the prophet's message to the people, or what may be even more likely, the message of the Messiah to His people (vv. 19-21). It can be taken either way, and has been taken both ways, but the latter is more likely.

I. THE EXHORTATION TO CONTINUE TO TRUST THE LORD (Isa. 26:1-4).

There is very much here that is profitable for us to consider for our own lives. Some people seem to make a good beginning after they have turned to the Lord, but often they do not continue, or their lives go up and down in their relationship with the Lord. This Psalm or Song was designed by the Holy Spirit to be sung by the people of God under the reign of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is a much-needed message for every child of God today. They aren't singing like this in Israel today, but the day is coming when our Lord returns when the earth and the heavens will ring for this kind of praise to the Lord.

Verse 1 emphasizes the security that Israel will enjoy under King Jesus. "We have a city." They had Jerusalem before, but they were driven from it, and it was destroyed. It exists as a city today, but, while it is a religious city, it is not a righteous city. The city still has no place for their Messiah and Lord. But in the days to come the city will be absolutely secure because, as the song begins, "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." And since the Lord is our salvation, this means that the Lord is our defense, an invincible defense. The greatest security there is, is the security that the people of God enjoy in their Savior.

Verse 2 indicates that the gates of the city will always be open to the righteous, and the righteous are those who "keep the truth." A believer is one who is righteous before God, but since he is righteous before God, he will seek by God's grace to live a righteous life before men. It is easy for people to claim to be righteous, but often the evidence to back up their claim is not there. In this respect "the city" is like "heaven." Cf. Rev. 21:27:

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Verses 3 and 4 are two verses which most Christians know, and man can quote from memory.

These verses are an advance upon verses 1 and 2. Verses 1 and 2 speak of *peace in the city from outward intervention*. These verses (3 and 4) speak of *personal peace, peace in the heart*. Both are necessary, and in the Lord we have both. Today we live in a world that really knows nothing about peace, true peace, lasting peace. But it is possible living in a world like this, to have peaceful hearts IF our minds are stayed upon the

Lord.

We are in the Christmas season as far as the world is concerned, and there is much talk and much singing about peace, but I am afraid that we say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). But this is what we have in Isa. 26:3-4. The Hebrew say, "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." What is "peace, peace"? It is as our translators have rendered it: "Perfect peace." It is a peace which continues on through all of the experiences of life. It is a peace which is complete, sufficient, and needs nothing else to make it real peace. This was the common greeting of the Jews, and it still is! It was the constant prayer of the apostles for individuals and churches. Peace is needed by everybody every day. It is not something that we generate within ourselves, but it comes from the Lord.

Now in the context of this verse, the Lord has to be the Messiah (although the truth that is taught in this verse would apply just as much to the Father as to the Son). It calls for having our minds "stayed" upon the Lord. What does this mean? It means, not just to be thinking about the Lord, although that is included, but it means to be leaning upon Him, resting in Him, trusting in Him. The child of God never should be uncertain about the faithfulness of God, nor the wisdom of God, nor the righteousness of God, nor of the presence of God. And the same applies to our Lord. And the strength that we need to keep trusting the Lord, comes from the Lord Himself.

The Lord Jehovah is Jah Jehovah. One Hebrew scholar has said that this is the Name of the Lord "in the most emphatic form" (I, 444). We need to remember that God is a living God. He sees everything. He hears everything. He knows everything. He is sufficient for everything. He never changes from day to day. What He was in Isaiah's day, He is today! And what He will be in the millennial reign, is what He always has been.

It is amazing that we have so much trouble trusting the Lord when we have all of the truth that we have in Scripture telling us about Him. And Jesus, the Messiah, is just like the Father.

So let us take this word to heart for ourselves today. There is nothing that is more important for any of us than for us to continue trusting in the Lord, leaning the full weight of all that concerns us upon Him.

The next part of the Song gives us:

II. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WAY OF THE WICKED (Isa. 26:5-11).

The One spoken to in verse 7 as the "most upright," is our Lord. And notice how He is addressed also from verse 8 on.

It seems clear from the Scriptures that man's basic sin is pride. It is pride that makes us think that we are self-sufficient. It is pride which demands that we have our own way. It is pride that keeps us from seeing our need of the Lord, and which makes us think that there is no one who should be able to tell us what to do. But it is also pride which God hates. Israel's enemies have been characterized by pride--from Egypt on down! Verse 5 tells us what the Lord does with the pride of man, here described as the pride of a city! The Lord brings it down until there is nothing left of it. And verse 6 describes the people of God as "the poor" and "the needy," what the people of Israel have been to their captors. In the end they will be the victors, and those who formerly had been their captors will be those whom the Lord will have vanquished.

We need to observe carefully what the Scriptures say about pride, and take warning from such verses as we

have before us here. “The way of the just is uprightness,” *i.e.*, God’s way with His people, those who are truly righteous. “Uprightness” speaks of that which is smooth, or plain. The people of God have their troubles like anyone else, but the Lord works all things together for good. Our Lord is here addressed as “most upright,” meaning that He levels things out between as one from the past has said (Junius quoted by Fausset, III, 643), controls both adversity and prosperity, so that the end result is good. He *weighs*, makes level, “the path of the just.”

Verse 8 shows the evidence of the work of the Lord in the hearts of His people. Instead of pride and self-confidence, we see humility and dependence. This will be the testimony of redeemed Israel. They are willing to wait on the “judgments” of the Lord, *i.e.*, on the way He leads, and on the outworking of His will. To wait in this verse is to wait patiently, and the desire is *the longing wish of their hearts*. We are reading the words here of a people who have surrendered themselves to the Lord willingly and lovingly, and who not only want His will, *but they want Him!* Sometimes we wait because we can’t do anything else, and sometimes we look for the will of God without particularly desiring the Lord Himself. How wonderful it would be if the words of verses 8 and 9 could be our words, spoken from the heart, which is where the Lord reads what we have to say.

The reality of the desire that the people have for the Lord is confirmed here. “The night” in this context is the time of Great Tribulation through which the nation has just passed. But it will not be a desire that passes when the trial is over, but a desire which becomes more and more intense as the people continue to grow in the Lord and to delight in His ways. These are the ways of the righteous.

The way of the wicked follows in verses 10 and 11.

Here is a picture of human depravity. The people of God in that day recognize that it is not the partiality of the Lord that makes Him do good to Israel, but bring judgment on the nations. The Lord was not withholding from people what they earnestly wanted. His “favor” had been shown to them, but they were not interested in Him, nor in “righteousness.” Even with all of the manifestations of the presence of the Lord and His blessings they continue to live “unjustly,” and refuse to see “the majesty of the Lord.”

The enemies of the Lord still refuse to see when the judgments of God are upon them, *but the Lord will make them see*, as He did with the Egyptians. But even then they persist in their rebellion against God when the fires of judgment are upon them. *Don’t ever feel that in judgment the Lord is judging people who want Him and His salvation. They do not! Even when judgment is upon them, as we learn from the book of the Revelation, they will curse God rather than turn to Him.*

This brings us to the third part of this Song of worship and praise.

III. THE LORD EXALTED BY HIS PEOPLE (Isa. 26:12-19).

What a relief it is to come to this section and read of the praise of a people who are grateful for the Messiah and all of His blessings.

In verse 12 the first blessing is “peace”—peace which has been “ordained” by God for His people. As being ordained, it is certain not only that they shall have it, but that they shall keep it! And they give the Lord the glory for all that has been done for them and in them. It is not only that their circumstances have been changed by the goodness of the Lord, *but they have been changed!* Nothing less than this can possibly be salvation.

In verse 13 the people look back at the past, and then turn their thoughts to the present. They have been

servants under lords in the past, and they are servants under *the* present (thinking of their millennial blessings), and they know that it is only by the grace of God that their circumstances have undergone a complete change. They hated their former lords; they love their present Lord—and joyfully submit to Him and to His will.

In verse 14 they describe their former lords, and they know that they shall never rise up again to do what they have done in the past. “They are dead, they shall not live.” And the Lord has blessed His people to such an extent that He has “made all their memory to perish,” that is, the memory that His people have had of their enemies.

But verse 15 tells us that the redemption will not only be personal, but it will be national. The nation which shall be scattered among all of the nations of the earth, will once again be a nation, a great nation, an “increased” nation. And the Lord alone is to be glorified for it. It has not been something that the nation will have done for themselves, but the Lord sovereignly will have gathered them from the north, the south, the east, and the west.

The “trouble” of verse 16 is another reference to the great suffering of the nation. The word “trouble” can actually be translated, tribulation. It speaks of distress and affliction. As we read several places in Scripture, it will be the worst time of affliction that the world has ever seen. But verse 16 goes on to say that just as the Lord has *visited* the world and especially Israel with His judgments, *so they will visit the Lord with their prayers* while the Lord’s “chastening was upon them.” Cf. Zech. 12:9-10:

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

In verses 17 and 18 their suffering are likened to that which a woman endures in child birth. But it has been pain without birth. Instead, it has been pain with death.

We come now to the last section of the song.

IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE MESSIAH, OR POSSIBLY THE PROPHET, FOR THE PEOPLE (Isa. 26:19-21).

Again, in verse 19, we come to the subject of resurrection. “Thy dead men shall live.” The travail of the nation has ended in death for so many, almost to the total destruction of the nation, but the good news is, “thy men shall live.”

You can see that the second statement of verse 19 could refer either to Isaiah, or to the Messiah. But again the reference seems to point to the Messiah because it is through the resurrection of our Lord, the Messiah, that the nation Israel will be brought back to life. And so the nation is called upon to “awake and sing.” And this is truth worth singing about. They had been dwelling in dust, *i.e., dead!* But the Lord’s hand upon them will make them like when happens to herbs in the desert when the dew is upon them. “Herbs” can be translated as *light*. “The earth shall cast out her dead,” *i.e.,* there will be a resurrection, and the language indicates that the births which had not taken place when Israel was experiencing her travail, will now come to pass.

Verse 20 and 21 give us an invitation, which is also a command. The message is from God, but it is the

prophet Isaiah calling upon the people to wait expectantly for the blessing of the Lord. The Tribulation will eventually pass when the Lord comes to take vengeance upon “the inhabitants of the earth” when all wrongs will be avenged, and peace will reign on the earth.

The nation Israel has faced judgments throughout her history because of her disobedience and rebellion against God. And this continues to the present day, and will reach its worst time in the Great Tribulation (as we have seen in these chapters which we have been considering. In the past, and even today, Israel has sought help from friendly nations, not for the Lord, except in rare instances. But here in verse 20 is a call for the people to “enter thou into thy chambers,” *i.e.*, to seek the Lord in what Delitzsch called, “the solitude of prayer” (I, 452). The Lord is the only One Who can deliver them, and who will deliver them. Therefore, their security is in seeking the Lord by prayer. The judgment of the Great Tribulation, as terrible as it will be, will only be for a short time, and, as our Lord said, it will be shortened for the sake of the elect. Cf. Matt. 24:22. And so the Great Tribulation is said here to be “for a little moment.”

The Tribulation will be brought to a close by the second coming of our Lord to the earth, as we see in verse 29 of Isa. 26. When the Lord does come He will “punish the inhabitants for the earth for the iniquity, and those enemies who have tried to cover the blood of those who have been martyred, shall no more be able to “cover her slain.” This is an illustration of what the Lord said to Cain after he had killed his brother Abel, “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Gen. 4:10). Men try to hide their sins from each other, and often succeed, but no one will ever be able to hide his sins from God. And that will be very apparent when the Lord comes back to reign.

What a day that will be! And as it will be with Israel in that day, so should it be with us today. We are told in 2 Timothy 3 that “perilous times” will come in the last days. And our hope is the blessed hope of the return of the Lord when He will come for us, the dead in Christ will rise first, and then we, too, shall be changed. There is much to be discouraged about today, but let us constantly be looking unto the Lord, trusting in Him as we await that time when He shall come, and we will see Him face to face, and be like Him and with Him forever.

Now we come to what we can consider the last part of the Psalm (chapter 27) that we have been considering, or another song that shall be sung in that great day of our Lord’s return to the earth, to rule and reign in righteousness over His people and those who shall be redeemed from among the nations of the earth.

January 5, 1998

Chapter 27.

There are four divisions to this part of the Psalm which began in Isa. 25, or, if we choose to separate the three chapters into three Psalms (25, 26, 27), then this is the third Psalm. Whatever may be the right view, there are four parts to this chapter:

- 1) The prediction of the Lord’s victory over the serpents and the dragon (27:1).
- 2) The Lord’s delight in His people (27:2-6).
- 3) The Lord’s judgment upon His people because of their sins, and in preparation for their salvation (27:7-11).
- 4) The regathering of Israel to worship the Lord in Jerusalem (27:12-13).

We need to notice how in this prophetic section we go from judgment to blessing, and back to judgment, and then on to blessing. In the way that it will all transpire, there will be the judgment of the Great Tribulation, followed by the coming of the Lord, and the blessing for Israel and the whole earth which will follow. But evidently the going back and forth as we have here is to emphasize the terrible nature of the judgments of God

which will be followed by blessings such as the nation has never yet experienced in all of her history. So, as is often the case, going back and forth is for the sake of emphasizing the certainty of all that is predicted here.

Now to the chapter.

I. THE PREDICTION OF THE LORD’S VICTORY OVER THE SERPENTS AND THE DRAGON (Isa. 27:1).

It is generally thought by many commentators that the serpents and the dragon are representative of Gentile powers, and it may be. That would certainly fit in with what we have already seen. But I believe there is the possibility that the prophet Isaiah was speaking here of the manifold activities of Satan during the Great Tribulation. After all, he is described in this way by the Apostle John in Rev. 12:9:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

So why should it not be expected that Holy Spirit, Who has known the end from the beginning, would not lead Isaiah to write about the very one who will be behind all of the persecution of Israel in the last days? The same Spirit Who directed the Apostle John in his writing, directed also the prophet Isaiah. And this is what the Apostle John said would follow the coming of our Lord to the earth:

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season (Rev. 20:1-3).

There can be no peace on earth unless Satan is bound, or cast out altogether (as he will ultimately be when he is cast into the lake of fire which was prepared specifically for him and his angels. When the judgment of the nations is described by our Lord in Matthew 25, those who were on His left hand were cast into the lake of fire. And this is how our Lord described hell:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

So I am inclined to believe that this is the meaning of Isa. 27:1. “Leviathan” means some kind of a sea monster. Its meaning is not clear, but since the sea is a figure of the nations, it would be a significant term to describe Satan’s work among the nations.

At any rate, whether it refers to some powerful nations, or to the Devil, the prediction is one of total victory by our Lord Jesus Christ. So Isa. 27:1 is definitely Messianic.

Going on to verse 2 we have:

II. THE LORD’S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE (Isa. 27:2-6).

Previously in Isaiah 25 and 26 the singing has been done by redeemed Israel. Here it is the Lord Who sings with great joy and delight over His people.

Verse 2 speaks of Israel as “a vineyard of red wine.” In Isa. 5:1-7 we have Israel pictured as the Lord’s vineyard.

Verse 3 speaks of the continual care that the Lord exercises over His people. It is only by the grace of God that Israel has been preserved as a nation. Psalm 121 reflects the teaching of this verse. And this is truth which applies also to the church, and to each one of us who belongs to the Lord in an individual way. There is nothing more amazing that the love that God has for His people. He may have to judge His people at times, but He never stops loving them, or us, and He never stops caring for His own.

In verse 4 we see that the fury of the Lord against His people has been spent. It is no longer in Him. And when He spoke of “briers and thorns” being set against Him, He was indicating that any opposition against Israel was an attack against Him, and He would “burn them together.” The Lord again is pictured as the One Who keeps and defends His people.

Verse 5 offers hope to the enemies of Israel, that is, to Gentile nations. “Let him take hold of my strength.” This means, let him put his trust in me; let him stay his heart upon me in order “that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” This is the peace that salvation brings, “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Cf. Isa. 26:3-4.

And finally we learn of the amazing blessing of God upon His people, first called Jacob (as a reminder of what they were), and then Israel (what they became by the grace and blessing of the Lord). This is one way of saying that

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (Isa. 11:9-10).

From this delightful scene we turn back to the judgment of God upon Israel which will take place prior to the blessing which has just been mentioned. And so from verse 7 through verse 11 we have:

III. THE LORD’S JUDGMENT UPON HIS PEOPLE (Isa. 27:7-11).

In verse 7 we see that the judgments which have fallen upon Israel (and will fall upon them in the Great Tribulation), although they may have come from the nations, were an act of His sovereign power. And yet, as severe as the judgments were, they were not as heavy as the Lord’s judgment upon Israel’s enemies.

But although God judged Israel in the past, and will judge Israel in the future, it is always to punish, but never to destroy! He judged “in measure,” “determining the measure exactly, that it might not exceed the enduring power of Israel, nor endanger the existence of Israel as a nation” (Delitzsch, I, 458). Nevertheless, Israel “wilt debate with it,” that is, complain about the judgment which the Lord brings upon them. And God the Lord “stayed his rough wind in the day of the east wind.” It is like the wind which drives the chaff away. God stays it, not making it as strong as it might be

And what is the purpose? Verse 9 gives us the answer. God’s purpose, we can say again, is not to destroy, but to restore. To purge away their sin. It is not that they are saved by the suffering which come upon them, but it is their sufferings which humble them, cause them to turn in repentance to the Lord, and it is through the sacrifice that the Messiah had made long ago (at this time) that their iniquity will be purged and their sins taken away.

And along with this the stones of the altar where they had worshiped false gods, and the groves and the images where their worship had taken place, will be destroyed, never to be brought back again.

But verse 10 goes on to describe the terrible desolation of Jerusalem. It is destroyed to the point that it is like no city ever existed there before. A calf feeds where there used to be a thriving city. And verse 11 goes on to predict that women will gather boughs of trees which are withered, and burn them in the fire (both for heat and for cooking), and they will not experience the slightest opposition. Thus the city and the nation will be as though they would never exist again.

But quickly the picture changes again as this chapter comes to an end. And in the last two verses we have:

IV. THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL TO WORSHIP THE LORD IN JERUSALEM (Isa. 27:12-13).

In verse 8 we read about the Lord blowing against Israel with “His rough wind in the day of the east wind.” Here we read that “in that day” the Lord will thresh a harvest of his people “from the chaimel of the river,” which is taken to be a reference to the Euphrates, “unto the stream of Egypt,” which bordered the land of Israel, “and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.” The word “gathered” can be translated *gleaned*. It speaks of a special gathering of the elect of Israel, “one by one.”

The dimensions of the land given hee in verse 12 are the same which the Lord gave to Abram in Gen. 15:18 where it is recorded that He said,

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

A further description of this regathering is given in verse 13.

A trumpet will sound, calling the people of God together, those who were “ready to perish” and “outcasts,” not in just the nations mentioned, Assyria and Egypt, but these are representative of all of the nations of the earth where the people of God will have been scattered.

But where will they be gathered, and why? They “shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” So miraculously the city and the temple will be rebuilt, and once again we have a testimony to the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of His Word. What a marvelous day that will be!

In Acts 15 where James was speaking to those who had gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the ministry of the Gospel to the Gentiles, he quoted from Amos 9:11-12 which says,

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things (Acts 15:13-17).

Therefore it had been known for almost 800 years before Christ that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, but that the Lord would rebuild it, and that in the city and temple the Lord would be worshiped “in that day” as never before.

Concl: God’s purposes will surely be fulfilled. Against the opposition of the nations and the unbelief of His

people, the Lord will nevertheless gain the victory. And it will all come about through the coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember today to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. This is what we are told to do in the Word: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (Psa. 122:6).

But let us apply the truths of these four chapter to ourselves today. The Lord is our Keeper, too. And there is no greater place of safety, regardless of the dangers, than for us to be walking in fellowship with the Lord, seeking by His grace to be obedient to His Word in every area of our lives. Cf. Isa. 26:3-4.

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 35
Christ in Isaiah – Part 4 –Isaiah 42:1-8
January 19, 1998

Intro: In our lesson for today I am moving on to the latter part of Isaiah’s prophecy: Isaiah 40-66. This is a section which is full of teaching regarding Christ. We have already had passages dealing with the birth of Christ, and with His glorious reign upon the earth. We could easily spend the remainder of this winter and spring on this latter part of Isaiah’s prophecy, and that would be very profitable for all of us. But I want to get on to other Old Testament prophecies of Christ, and so I am going to limit myself to two passages in this latter part of Isaiah. The passages are Isaiah 42:1-8, and that which could certainly be considered one of the greatest of all Messiah passages, Isaiah 53, where we would need also to include the last three verses of Isaiah 52, verses 13-15.

The passage in Isaiah 42:1-4 is quoted in Matthew’s Gospel, Matthew 12:17-21. It has to do with God the Father’s statement concerning His Son, and has a great deal to say about *the character of the Lord Jesus, and the nature of His ministry on earth.*

The passage in Isaiah 53:1-12 is the outstanding passage in the Old Testament on the suffering and death of our Lord..

So with these two added to what we have already had, we will have a fairly complete picture of our Lord’s ministry on earth from His birth to His return to earth to reign. F. B. Meyer, who wrote a commentary on this latter part of Isaiah, entitled it, *Christ in Isaiah*. And in his Preface to his book, he made this statement:

Before us pass, in vivid outlines, the scenes by which our redemption was secured. The humiliation and suffering, the sorrow and anguish of soul, substitution and death, exaltation and satisfaction of the Saviour are portrayed, with the minuteness and accuracy of a contemporary; and there is hardly a sentence from which we cannot begin and preach Jesus, as Philip did to the Ethiopian eunuch (p. 5).

I want you to notice that part of Meyer’s statement in which he described the writing of Isaiah as having been done “with the minuteness and accuracy of a contemporary.” I take it that he meant that Isaiah wrote as though he had been an eyewitness of the earthly ministry of our Lord. This is why the prophecy of Isaiah is sometimes referred to as “the Gospel of Isaiah.” When we remember that he wrote approximately 700 years before our Lord was born, we see that the details he has given us of Christ could only have been possible because he was speaking by the direction of the Holy Spirit. And we know that he not only spoke, as F. B. Meyer said, with complete accuracy, but we minute detail about the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. This surely is proof positive of the verbal inspiration of Isaiah’s prophecy. Or, as the Apostle Peter would write later concerning the OT, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21b). Isaiah would not have been able to write as he did if the Holy Spirit had not been directing him as he wrote each word.

But now let us turn to the first of these two passages.

ISAIAH 42:1-8.

(Read it.)

The Speaker here is God the Father. And, if we need added proof that He was speaking about His Son, the account in Matthew’s Gospel gives us that proof. (Cf. Matt. 12:17-21.) I think that if the Holy Spirit has given us any understanding at all in reading Isaiah’s prophecy, we could come to no other conclusion than that Isaiah

was giving us the Father’s words about His Son. The quotation in Matthew includes only the first four verses of Isaiah 42, but it is obvious that the emphasis on our Lord goes on farther into the chapter. But for our study I am only going to include the first eight verses.

One difference between the first four verses of this chapter and the second four, is that in the first the Father spoke primarily *about* His Son; in verses 5-8 (and it is seen especially in verses 6-8) the Father was speaking directly *to* His Son. One of the greatest studies in Scripture is what is revealed to us about the relationship that God the Father and God the Son had with each other. This is one of the strong features we can see in the Gospel according to John, the Apostle. But it is the key to this passage in Isaiah.

42:1 “Behold” is a word used frequently by the prophets to call attention to something very important. And here it is used by the Father to introduce His Son. So, if it is important to the Father, it surely ought to be very important to us.

But the Father did not present His Son as His Son, but as His Servant. And this is what ought to attract our attention immediately.

In Isa. 42:8 Israel is referred to as the servant of Jehovah. And we know that Isaiah as a prophet was a servant of Jehovah, but neither Israel nor Isaiah could possibly fit into what is declared here about the Messiah. Our Lord Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the Servant of the Lord (Jehovah), the ideal Servant.

The Apostle Paul tells us that our Lord “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7b). And then he followed those statements by saying that our Lord “humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2: 8b). I have said before, and I say it again, that the greatest concern that our Lord had while He was here on earth, was that He do the will of His Father in heaven. John 8:38 gives us our Lord’s own words: “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” And all of the passages which speak of Christ having been sent by the Father, or the Father giving His Son, reflect this amazing truth. He did not think that His equality with the Father which He had enjoyed for all eternity, was something that He had to maintain regardless of anything else, but He voluntarily submitted Himself to the will of His Father even though it was going to mean that He would have to die for those whom the Father had given to Him. All that our Lord did while He was here on earth, was done in perfect obedience to the Father. How tenderly the Father must have said those words, “Behold, My Servant.” The Father has had many servants, but none ever did the will of the Father like the Lord Jesus did. And so He has the first claim to the title, *the Servant of the Lord*.

When we get to Isaiah 52:13 and the opening of that great passage on the sufferings of our Lord, we shall see that again the Father said, “Behold, My Servant.”

But what comes next?

“Whom I uphold.” All through our Lord’s life on earth, and throughout His death and resurrection, the Father was supporting Him, sustaining Him, holding Him by His hand.

We will never be able to understand fully what it meant to our Lord to become a human being, but here is a suggestion of how our Lord constantly needed the support of His Father. How else can we explain the amazing prayer life of our Lord? Remembering He was not praying as a formality, or just as an Example for us, but He prayed because He needed the full and continuous support of His Father. And this statement, “Whom I uphold,” was the Father’s pledge that He would always be faithful to His Son. Perhaps this relationship was at

least in part what Paul had in mind when He said, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). And the Lord made reference to this in John 8:29 where it is recorded that He said,

And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Even in this passage in Isaiah which we are considering, we have a statement made by the Father as to what it meant that He would “uphold” His Son. See Isa. 42:6.

Not only did the Father speak of His Son as “My Servant,” but we see next that He called him, “Mine Elect.” We see often in Scripture how the Father, and the Son also, love to dwell on words like “My” and “Mine.” But never are these words used with greater tenderness and affection than when they are used by the Father concerning the Son, or by the Son concerning the Father. The Son was the Father’s *chosen One*. He was the One Whom the Father had singled out for the work that He had come to do. He was appointed by the Father, which is why we call Him, Christ, or Messiah. *There was no other among angels or men who was qualified to do the work that the Father sent His Son to do.*

And so after just the few words we have had since the beginning of this verse, we should not be surprised to read that the Father continued speaking about His Son when He said, “in Whom My soul delighteth.”

How pleased the Father was with His Son! How completely and infinitely satisfied the Father was with His Son—more so than He has ever been with anyone else.

I am sure that as you read these words you are reminded of what our Lord said twice when He spoke from heaven during our Lord’s ministry on earth. The first of these was when our Lord was baptized. Listen to Matthew’s account in Matt. 3:13-17:

- 13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
- 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
- 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
- 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
- 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The second was at the Transfiguration of our Lord. Matthew also recorded what the Father said at that time:

- 1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
- 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
- 3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
- 4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
- 5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
- 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.
- 7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.
- 8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Matt. 17:1-8).

The Father did not say this about Moses, nor Elijah, nor about Peter or James or John—although we know that

the same thing could have been said about any of those men in a more limited way. But the Father could say it without any qualification about His Son. And He did. And from the time that Isaiah wrote these words until the Lord actually came to earth, *the statement concerning Christ had undergone no change!*

In 2 Cor. 5:9 the Apostle Paul said that this was the ambition of his life. The NKJ translates that verse this way: “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” It was because the Father could say this about His Son, that His Son could be our Savior.

But there is more.

“I have put my Spirit [it should be capitalized] upon Him.” We read about this a moment ago. When the Lord came up out of the Jordan after being baptized by John the Baptist. The Apostle John gave us this report of what John the Baptist said after he had baptized the Lord:

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him (John 1:32).

Note those last five words: “And it [or, *He*] abode upon Him. I believe we can say that all that the Lord did while He was here on earth, preaching, performing miracles, etc. He did in the power of the Spirit. So He was upheld by the Father, and indwelt by the Spirit, and this, too, was all a part of His humiliation, but also a great part of His glory.

And now we have a word about our Lord’s ministry.

“He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” The Gentiles are referred to again as “the isles” in verse 4, and also by name in verse 6. But what does it mean that “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” This means that He will *deliver judicial justification for the Gentiles*. It is a statement indicating that our Lord will not only provide salvation for Jewish people, but for Gentiles as well.

Just yesterday I was reading, along with many of you, the message that the Apostle Paul brought to the Jews in Jerusalem, telling them about how he became a Christian. And the crowd listened quietly until the Apostle Paul said what the Lord told him to do. These were the Lord’s words: “And He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21). And then this is what happened:

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

That crowd of Jews went berserk when the Apostle Paul used the word “Gentiles.” This shows how far the nation had gotten from knowing the purpose of God in salvation. It is mentioned over and over again in the OT that salvation was not just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. And here in Isaiah 42 we have one of them. The Lord Jesus would do all that was necessary for Gentiles to be justified before God, just as He would do all that was necessary for Jews to be justified. It never was God’s will to save all Jews, or all Gentiles, but there is only one way of salvation and only one Savior for Jews and Gentiles, and that is through Christ. And here we have the prediction, the certain declaration, that the Lord would deliver salvation for Gentiles.

What an amazing amount of truth there is in just this first verse of Isaiah 42!

But now let us go on to verse 2.

42:2 How different are the ways of God from the ways of man! The Lord was born of a very humble mother, and actually in obscurity. Some were brought to Him as a baby, but there was no great fanfare accompa-

ning His birth or His ministry. He never traveled very far. The men He chose to work with Him were definitely not of the upper class. The Lord did attract people through His preaching and through the miracles that He performed, but verse 2 in this chapter really describes His life and ministry.

Franz Delitzsch’s commentary on this verse is as follows:

Although He is certain of His divine call, and brings to the nations the highest and best, His manner of appearing is nevertheless quiet, gentle, and humble; the very opposite of those lying teachers, who endeavored to exalt themselves by noising demonstrations. He does not seek His own, and therefore denies Himself; He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires no forced trumpeting (II, p. 175).

It is to be regretted that the church of this latter part of the twentieth century has not followed the Lord in the character of His ministry. We feel that we have to put on programs that will attract people from the outside. The ministry of the Word is not given the primary place. Preachers feel like they must be entertainers and great communicators. The early Christians went everywhere preaching the Word. Delitzsch’s words describing our Lord’s ministry, are not popular words in churches today: “quiet, gentle, and humble.” If we want to see the blessing of the Lord in the transformation of lives, we need to follow our Lord’s ways, giving to God all of the glory for whatever He may see fit to do through us.

Our Lord made not *outcry*. He did not seek to exalt Himself, which is what it means to lift up His voice, and cause it to be heard in the streets. How carefully we need to study the ministry of our Lord as it is recorded for us in the Gospels.

4:3 “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.” Here the Father was speaking of the weaknesses and sins of His own people. How gracious the Lord was with Abraham in his unbelief, with Moses in his impatience, with David in his gross sins, with Peter in his denials, with John Mark in his unfaithfulness. He who has begun a good work in us, will perform it and perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. How easy it is for us to write people off instead of loving them and praying for them and seeking them and encouraging them. “A bruised reed is already broken,” and “the smoking flax” is almost extinguished. But instead of letting the work of destruction go on in the lives of those who truly belong to the Lord, He binds up those who are bruised, and He ignites the fire of those whose lamp is ready to go out.

January 20, 1998

In one sense, this is what Isaiah was, or had been, as the record of his call in Isaiah 6 indicates. He was ministering to a nation which could be described with these terms—bruised reeds and smoking flax. A “reed” can be any number of grass-like plants which grow in masses. “Flax” is a tender plant with blue flowers and narrow leaves. Its fibers were made into linen and when twisted, as would have been the case here, they were made into wicks such as were used in candles. Figures of speech like this are used to describe the people of God. When we should be like trees planted by rivers of living water, we are instead bruised reeds and smoking flax.

How encouraged Isaiah must have been to have received this message from God! What a contrast there often is between the Lord Jesus and us, His people! “A bruised reed” deserved to be broken off from the plant as being worthless, and “a smoking flax,” or a *dimly burning flax*, as it might be translated, could be extinguished. But instead we read, “He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” Compare this with the last statement of verse 1. The quotation in Matt. 12:20 renders it, “He shall send forth judgment unto victory.” We have seen from verse 1 of Isa. 42 that the “judgment” spoken of here has to do with our standing in a judicial sense before God, *i.e.*,

our justification. Quite often there is a real contrast in believers between *their standing before God, and their state*. That is, their sanctification lags behind their justification. But the Lord will so work in the hearts of His people that their present state is consistent with their perfect standing before God. It is not something that we as believers do for ourselves, but it is a work that the Lord does for us. It is when we recognize our need, and turn to the Lord to meet our need, that there can be victory.

When Paul was writing to that spiritually troubled Corinthian church, he said in chapter 15, verse 57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the final victory for the people of God when the corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and the mortal shall have put on immortality. And that is where the Apostle Paul said, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54b). He was referring to that passage which we considered just a short time ago, that which is written in Isa. 25:8.

So I take it that what the Father was saying at the end of Isa. 42:3 means that ultimately our Lord Jesus Christ will see to it that all of the people of God will appear outwardly as we are inwardly. And that day will come when the Lord returns.

42:4 The word "fail" is an interesting word to place in this context because it can be translated, *to grow weak, or to become dim*. And so comparing what is here said about the Lord in comparison with what is said about the people of God in verse 3, the meaning is that *the Lord will never become like His people when they can only be described as bruised reeds and smoking flax*. We are going to become like He is, but He is not going to become like we are, sinners by nature and, regrettably, often sinners by choice. It is sin which makes us bruised reeds and smoking flax. Not only is it true that our Lord *did no sin* (see 1 Pet. 2:22), but it is also true that there is *no sin in Him*. (See 1 John 3:5.)

"Nor be discouraged" – Fausset translates this expression as meaning "checked in zeal by discouragements" (III, 694). We may fail the Lord again and again by our sins of disobedience and unbelief, but He will never give up on us. We get discouraged with ourselves, and we easily get discouraged with others. But this is never true of the Lord. He is grieved with our sin, but never even considers giving up on those who truly belong to Him.

How long will this be true of our Lord?

"Till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." In Matthew's quotation of this passage, we read, "Till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust." So Isaiah's reference to "the isles" is a reference to *the elect among the Gentiles*. Speaking from our standpoint, God's work among the Jews is one problem, but extending that work to the Gentiles with people who refuse to give it to the Gentiles, is another problem. And add to this that the hearts of the Gentiles are just as wicked and just as weak as those of the Jews, the prospect of the work of God being accomplished (if it were dependent upon us) *just is not there!* But it is there! And it is there because as we can say about everything in our salvation, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psa. 118:23).

And so for the third time in these four verses at the beginning of Isaiah 42, we have the word "judgment." In verses 1 and 4, it has to do with the Gentiles; in verse 3 it has to do with the Jews. God's purposes regarding His elect among the Jews and His elect among the Gentiles, will be fully accomplished. Let there be no doubt about this. But let us also make the application to our own lives. We often fail and are discouraged with ourselves. But this is when we need to turn to the Lord in greater faith, realizing that what is impossible for us, is not impossible with Him!

And what ought to encourage us even more is the last statement of verse 4: “And the isles [the Gentiles] shall wait for His law,” *i.e.*, His Word (and this means primarily *the Gospel*. *Waiting* for God’s Word suggests that they are hoping for it, expecting it, and waiting for it.

But this is not what we see when we look at the Gentiles in any generation. By nature the Gentiles are just as opposed to the Gospel as the Jews are. But we must remember that it was never God’s purpose to save every Jew, or every Gentile. What God intends to do, He does! And no one can stand in His way. No, the Father was not speaking of every Gentile, but of Gentiles like those who were gathered together in the house of Cornelius, the account of which is given to us in Acts 10. God was obviously at work in the heart of that Gentile soldier. And the Lord appeared to Cornelius in a vision and told him to send for the Apostle Peter who at that time was in Joppa, a distance of approximately 35 miles south of Caesarea where Cornelius was. And you will remember how Cornelius sent three men to get Peter. Peter went with them, and a few of his Jewish brethren went with him. When Peter arrived Cornelius explained why he had sent for him. And at the conclusion of his explanation he said this:

Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded of thee of God (Acts 10:33b).

These were Gentiles who were hoping for the Gospel, expecting it, waiting for it. And this was true of them because God was at work in their hearts.

Add to this the account in Acts 16 of the conversion of Lydia who was in Philippi, but was from Thyatira in the Roman province of Asia. Listen to what was said about her in Acts 16:14:

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

It is always true that when people are waiting and receptive to the Gospel message, it is because God is working! You and I would never have come to Christ if God had not been at work in our lives to draw us to Himself. The Lord Jesus Himself made this very clear when He said,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

And just before this our Lord had said,

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

We can never rightly understand the Gospel until we know something of the glory and power and wisdom of God, and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God is infinitely powerful, absolutely sovereign over all. And He will see that all of His purposes are fully accomplished in spite of the hardness, the blindness, the hatred, and the resistance that we can see in people in every place and in every generation. Even we would never have come to Christ if God had not drawn us, and if Christ had not died for us. Let us dwell much on the truth that we find in these first four verses of Isaiah 42, and then turn to God to praise Him for His grace and His love in sending His Son to die for our sins. He has brought “judgment” to us if we know Him, and the day will come, in spite of all of our sins and weaknesses, when outwardly we will be what in heart we are now.

In the first four verses of Isaiah 42 we have been reading what God has been please to say about His Son; now I would like to take you to the next four verses (5-8) to see what God has said to His Son.

January 26, 1998

What we have in this section (Isa. 42:1-8) has to do with the Father’s relationship with His Son, and the focus

is upon the character of the Son, as well as upon His ministry. In these days when a very strong attitude among many Americans that character really does not have anything to do with a person’s performance, it is refreshing to turn to the Word of God to find that *character has everything to do with a person’s performance*. It was our Lord’s character that qualified Him to be the Savior.

42:5 Concerning these verses, Delitzsch said in his commentary on Isaiah,

The words of Jehovah are now addressed to His Servant Himself [that is, it is the Father Who speaks here as “God the Lord”]. He [that is, the Son] has not only an exalted vocation, answering to the infinite exaltation of Him [the Father] from Whom He has received His call; but by virtue of the infinite *might* [italics mind] of the Caller [the Father], He [the Son] will never be wanting in power to execute His calling (II, 177).

Fausset made a similar statement in his commentary:

To show to all that He is able to sustain the Messiah in His appointed work, and that all might accept Messiah as commissioned by such a mighty God, He commences by announcing Himself as the Almighty Creator and Preserver of all things (III, 694)..

The words that follow are not words describing Isaiah, nor any other human being, but they are words which describe God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He “created the heavens.” This would include all that is in the heavens—the sun, the moon, the stars and planets—in countless numbers! And He did this without having any material to work with “in the beginning.” And then He put them all in the place: “He “stretched them out.”

In Isa. 40:22 it is said that God “stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.” And in verse 26 of Isa. 40, a few verses later, we read this:

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

So the point is that the Lord made the heavens and all that they contain. He sustains them year after year. He knows each star by its name, and “not one faileth.” Man is constantly talking about the universe being exhausted, and ceasing to exist. But that will never take place until the Lord decrees it.

The same thing can be said about God and the earth. He “spread forth the earth.” He is the Creator of the earth also. He put the mountains where they are. He placed the oceans where they are. He put every river and stream where it is. And He created all of the living creatures who live on the earth, and in the earth, and who fly above the earth. These are they “which cometh out of it. And He has even divided the earth and placed the nations where He wants them to be.

But that is not all! “He...giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.”

We have much of this declared in Psalm 104. Let me read a part of that Psalm to you:

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

- 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
- 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.
- 31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.
- 32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
- 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
- 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD (Psa. 104:24-34).

We don't meditate as much as we should on God as the Creator. This will give us great and exalted thoughts of God. It will strengthen our faith. And the point here is that since God is God (with all that that means), there is no question but that the Messiah will be able to fulfill His mission in every detail.

The point in this fifth verse is the equivalent of saying what is declared of Abraham in Rom. 4:20-22:

- 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
- 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.
- 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

42:6 At this point God the Lord begins to speak to His Son.

His first words, “I have called Thee in righteousness.” Verses 6 and 7 contain the Gospel. And we need to remember that there would be no Gospel if it were not for what God has done for sinners in Christ. The idea in this first statement is that God has been perfectly righteous in what He had done, but it also indicates that He has had a righteous purpose in what He has done. God was not excusing man's sin, nor overlooking it, but He was dealing with it through the work of His Son. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when He wrote Rom. 3:24-26:

- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The work of Christ for sinners has been done in perfect righteousness. That is the prediction here in Isa. 42.

In verse 1 we saw that the Father promised to “uphold” His Son. And here that is declared again. The Father would do three things for the Son:

- 1) He would hold His hand.
- 2) He would keep Him.
- 3) He would “give” Him “for a covenant of the people,” *i.e.*, of Israel, and “for a light of the Gentiles.”

All of this means that the purpose of God would not fail. “God was in Christ reconciling the world,” the world of Jews and Gentiles, “unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). He did not impute the sins of the people to the people themselves, but He imputed them to His Son. Christ was, and is, God's covenant to His people. The promise of salvation was secure from the very first because it rested upon the power of God and the faithfulness of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So much was involved in the work of salvation, that it is very important to see that the power of God which was manifested in creation, and continues to be manifested in the operation of the universe from generation to

another, is the power that secured our salvation. The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

In all of this we see Christ as our great High Priest. In Heb. 8 where the Apostle was continuing his comparison of the priests under the Law, with our Lord, he said this:

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people (Heb. 8:6-10).

The Law could not save. It only showed the need of salvation. The new covenant is based, not upon Law, but upon grace, a covenant which depends not upon man’s faithfulness to God, but upon God’s faithfulness to man. And this is why it is a covenant which cannot fail.

42:7 Whenever we talk to people about Christ and their need of salvation, we immediately are reminded that we are faced with three impossible situations:

- 1) They are blind, spiritually blind, and they cannot see. They are not only ignorant of the truth, but absolutely incapable of understanding the truth. Blindness in Scripture always carries with it the idea of *hardness*. We see that in Scripture in Moses’ dealings with Pharaoh. In the NT we see it in the case of the scribes and the Pharisees.
- 2) A second thing that we can say about people without Christ is that they are prisoners. They are in bondage to sin and to Satan.
- 3) Finally, according to our text in verse 7, they are in darkness. What is more hopeless than trying to get a person who is blind and sitting in darkness, to see the light. The Gospel just not make sense to people who are still in their sins.

There are other things that could be said about people who are without Christ, but these three make a totally hopeless situation. We are sent to people who, in the first place, don’t want what we have to tell them, but they are blind (hardened), enslaved, and in total darkness. *What hope do we have that anyone will ever see, or be able to lay aside the shackles of sin, or step out into the light? How did the truth of the Gospel ever reach us?*

Will you notice Who it is Who opens blinded eyes, and Who it is Who brings the prisoners out of the prison house, and Who gives light to them who sit in darkness? It is not God alone. Nor is it His Servant, our Lord, alone. But it is God and His Servant, God Who is the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is where we need to go back to verse 5 to be reminded that we are talking about the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And remember that the Apostle John gave that title, in so many words, to our Lord Jesus. He said in John 1:3, speaking of our Lord, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

When our Lord was here on earth, on many occasions He opened the eyes of those who were physically blind. And He also opened the eyes of many who were spiritually blind. He set free many who were in bondage to

their sins. And under His ministry, people saw the light, and came out of darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel of the grace of God.

None of us gave sight to ourselves. None of us set ourselves free. None of us voluntarily came out of the darkness into the light. God and His Son, Jesus Christ, gave us sight. God and His Son, Jesus Christ, brought us out of the prison house of sin. God and His Son brought us out of darkness into the light of salvation. You see, salvation is a work of God. We are to give the message, to give it plainly and faithfully, but it is God Who saves. And how was it that the Apostle Paul described our salvation in 2 Cor. 5:17? This is what he said,

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

I like the way it is translated in the NIV: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” and every time a sinner is saved, “a new creation” takes place. And our text indicates, as we listen to what the Father said to His Son, that just as there would never have been a heaven nor an earth unless God had created them, so there would never have been a person saved apart from the creative work of God through Christ where ungodly sinners become saints. How thankful we all can be that this is the work that the Lord has done for us. He has not worked over the old, but He has made something, as we would say, “brand new!”

I didn’t save myself, and you didn’t save yourself. And none of us has saved anyone else, either. If God hadn’t saved us, we wouldn’t be saved. And, in the same way, if God did not use us when we give the Gospel to someone else and see them come to Christ, it would be a waste of our time to talk to people about trusting in Christ in order to be saved.

Now all of this brings us to verse 8, the last of the verses in this chapter that we are going to consider.

42:8 At this point it seems that the Father turns from speaking to His Son, and He speaks to the people of God in Judah. Let me read it to you. (Read.)

“I am the Lord.” What majestic words these are! And they ought to bring us to our knees every time we read them in the Bible. It is used one hundred and sixty-one times in the OT. Sometimes it is “I am the Lord thy God,” and at other times, “I am the Lord their God,” but you will find it all through the OT.

And Lord is the OT *Jehovah*. As I have said many, many times, it is formed from the Hebrew verb, *to be*. When Moses was raising his objections to the Lord against the call that the Lord had given him, he said this:

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

This was the Lord’s answer:

14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

These three verses are found in Exodus 3:13-15.

Our God is the ever-living God, without beginning, and without ending. Our Lord Jesus Christ is also the ever-

living God, without beginning, and without ending. And the same can be said about the Holy Spirit. And being ever-living, They are ever the same, unchanging. The Lord said this to His people in the days of Malachi, and His words are recorded in Mal.3:6: “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

But let us go on in this last verse.

“I am the LORD: that is my Name.” When you and I were born, someone else named us. Maybe we like it, or maybe we don’t like it. However, most of us never change our names. But the Lord has named Himself, and His Name is very significant. None but God and the other Members of the Godhead can claim this Name. It would be blasphemy for me to ask you to call me, Jehovah. That is God’s Name, and nobody else must ever dare to use it. And the Lord went on to say, “And my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

What an insult it was to God that His people, of all people, should bow down before graven images, and call them, “Lord..” A lifeless image, the work of man, should be worshiped at Jehovah. It is no wonder that the Lord judged His people for such outrageous sin. And let me say that people in churches today who bow before images of Christ or of anyone else, and cross themselves, are courting the judgment of God.. Our God is holy. There is none like Him. And to treat others, or lifeless images, as we should only treat Him, is one of the greatest of sins.

But let me suggest something that has occurred to me in studying this passage. Here the Lord was speaking to His Son. In the earlier part of this chapter the Lord was speaking about His Son, His Servant-Son. We saw that His Son was the One in Whom the Father delighted.. Could it be that when the Father said, “My glory I will not give to another,” that He meant *to none other but my Servant, my Son*? And my reason for saying this is because of a passage in Exodus 23 where we have these words from the Lord:

20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him (Ex. 23:20-21).

I said a moment ago that it would be blasphemous for me or for you or for any other human being to claim and use the Lord’s Name as our own. But there is One exception to that statement, and the exception is the Lord Jesus. For God to say to Moses about that Angel that “My Name is in Him,” was to indicate that the Angel Who was to go before them was Himself Deity, and therefore had to be our Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. That is why we say that in most instances in the OT where the Angel of the Lord appears, it is Christ. God’s Name is His glory and it is His praise (according to Isa. 42:8), and Jesus Christ is the only other One Who has the right to claim it.

Concl: For this passage to end as it does where God said, “I am the Lord,” was like signing His Name to a contract, or to use the word that is used in verse 6, like signing His Name to a “covenant.” And it has a double signature since our Lord Jesus can claim the same Name. This means that there is no possibility that there can be a failure with this covenant of salvation. It is secured by God and by His faithful Servant and Son. When I think of this I am reminded of what our Lord said in John 10, verses 27 to 30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

Here is great assurance. We have it on the authority of our ever-living and never-changing Lord. The Lord will never break His covenant, nor will He ever change it. He will not take anything away, and there is nothing that He could possibly add to it. Our salvation is absolutely and eternally secure. There has never been a covenant made like the new covenant, and there could never be one that will surpass it.

I am sorry that we can't go on and finish this chapter, but I want to conclude this series this year, and I will never make it if we don't move right along. But as we leave this section after seeing all of the great truth that we have seen in the first eight verses, let me call your attention just briefly to what follows from verse 9 on for several verses. I will close by reading Isa.. 42:9-12.

Let this praise be our response to all that we have learned in this chapter about our salvation.

“Christ in the Old Testament”
Lesson 36
Christ in Isaiah – Part 4 – Isaiah 52:13-53:12
February 2, 1998

Intro: It is generally agreed by evangelical scholars and devout students of Isaiah’s prophecy that Isa. 53 should begin at Isa. 52:13, and that is where we will begin our study.

The passage which we will be considering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is unsurpassed in its presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and the Christ of God. Therefore, it is not surprising that it should be the subject of much controversy down to the present time. But when we take the Scriptures themselves, both the Old and New Testaments, there can be no doubt but that this passage refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. The quotations of this passage in the NT settle it once and for all. Let me point them out as we get started with this wonderful section of the Scriptures.

In Matthew 8:16-17 we read these words:

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

The margin reference in your Bible will tell you that this is a quotation from the first part of Isa. 53:4.

Mark, in writing in his Gospel about our Lord being crucified between two thieves, made this comment: Mark 15:28: “And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.” This is a quotation from Isa. 53:12.

Luke 22:37 gives us another reference to Isa. 53—a reference to Isa. 53:12. Our Lord Himself use it:

For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end (Luke 22:37).

Next is John 1:29:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This is not a direct quotation, but certainly was based in part on Isa. 53:7/

John 12:37-41 gives us a reference from Isa. 53:1 and also from Isa. 6:10:

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him (John 12:37-41).

I have not said a great deal about the controversy that has surrounded the prophecy of Isaiah, but there are many scholars, usually liberal, who think that one Isaiah wrote the first 39 chapters, and that another Isaiah at a later date wrote the last 27 chapters. This teaching is called a Deutero-Isaiah. But these two quotations show that both sections are attributed to the same Isaiah, and therefore the dispute is settled.

When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch as the latter was returning to his country, the eunuch was reading from

the prophecy of Isaiah. And this is what we are told in Acts 8:26-35:

- 26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.
- 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,
- 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.
- 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.
- 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?
- 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.
- 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
- 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.
- 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?
- 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:26-35).

In Rom. 10:16 we read as Paul was speaking of the unbelief of the Jews: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” I am sure you recognize that verse as a quote from Isa. 53:1.

In 1 Pet. 2:21-24 we have several statements that are rooted in Isaiah 53, concluding with the final statement of Isa. 53:5:

- 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:
- 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
- 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:
- 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

So the evidence in the NT that Isaiah 53 speaks of Christ is overwhelming. Fausset, in the JFB commentary, had this to say about Isa. 52:13-53:12:

The correspondence with the life and death of Jesus Christ is so minute that it could not have resulted from conjecture or accident. An impostor could not have shaped *the course of events* so as to have made his character and life appear to be a fulfilment of it. The writing is...*declaredly prophetic* (Vol. III, p. 727).

The attacks upon the book of Isaiah, and especially upon the emphasis upon Christ in Isaiah, has been directed by men who do not believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible. But we who know that “men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” have no trouble in believing that the prophets of the OT could write about Christ as though it were history even though the prophecies concerning the earthly life and death of our Lord were given, in Isaiah’s case, approximately 700 years before Christ came. The study of Biblical prophecy should strengthen our faith in the divine origin of the Bible. This is what sets the Bible apart from every other book which has ever been written.

Now let us get to the exposition of the text.

I am going to give you an outline which is an adaptation of the outline David Baron gave in his book on this passage. His book is called, *The Servant of Jehovah*.

There are three divisions:

- 1) The Introduction (Isa. 52:13-15). Here we really have a survey of character, glory, sufferings, and effect of our Lord's ministry. And please note by comparing verse 13 with verse 14 that it is not unusual in prophecy for the actual order of events to be reversed because in verse 13 we have our Lord's glory; in verse 14, His sufferings.
- 2) The Life and Sufferings of our Lord upon the Earth (Isa. 53:1-9). This is the longest section in this portion of Scripture. And it is such an amazing prediction of what would actually happen to our Lord that it is no wonder that many have been skeptical that it could have been written so long before Christ actually was upon the earth.
- 3) The Satisfaction of the Father with the Work of His Son (Isa. 53:10-12).

We could say further about these three sections that:

- 1) In Isa. 52:13-15 we have God the Father speaking about His Son.
- 2) In Isa. 53:1-9 we have the prophet Isaiah speaking for himself and the redeemed of Israel.
- 3) In Isa. 53:10-12 the prophet Isaiah continues to speak about the Father's part in the death of His Son, and the Father's complete satisfaction with what His Son had done.

This is a passage which we need to read over and over until we know it so well we can say it from memory. It is interesting that as far as chapters are concerned (which are not inspired), Isaiah 53 is the central chapter of the last 27 chapters. With regard to the truth it gives us, it really is the heart of Isaiah's prophecy and surely is unsurpassed in all of the OT in dealing with the sufferings and death and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. THE INTRODUCTION (Isa. 52:13-15).

52:13 We learned in Isa. 42 that one of the titles of the Messiah in Isaiah (and elsewhere) is that He is *the Servant of Jehovah*. He came to do the will of the Father, and He did it perfectly! And here, as in Isa. 42:1, the Father is presenting His Servant, introducing Him, if we can express it that way.

“Behold” was a word used by God to call attention to the amazing description of our Lord which follows, a message which is extremely important for all men everywhere to know, to believe, and to receive. How tragic it is that most people never give a thought to our Lord! They know nothing about Him. They have no idea Who He is, or why He came. Instead, you do not listen to the conversation of ungodly men very long before you hear His holy Name used in blasphemy. It was no accident that when Pilate was trying our Lord before the Jews, he said to them, “Behold the man!” (John 20:5). And then shortly after that he said to them, “Behold your King!” (John 20:14). Although Pilate did not know it, he was being the Lord's spokesman to the rebellious nation of Israel, and it was like a last appeal for them to realize the terrible thing they were asking Pilate to do, and for which God would hold the nation equally responsible. “Behold, my Servant.”

If those of us who know the Lord are to be like Him, we need to behold Him. We need to see Him daily in the Word. We need to learn of Him, and grow in our love for Him. We need to do as we are exhorted to do in Heb. 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith...” And we need to see how carefully and consistently and joyfully He did the will of the Father, always doing what would please the Father. Let us do as the Father said we should do, “Behold, my Servant.”

“He shall deal prudently.” The translators of our various English versions vary between the ideas of prudence, or wisdom, and prosperity. And both apply here to our Lord. He was the Lord’s servant, always doing the Lord’s will. Consequently He would prosper, *i.e.*, fully accomplish what He came to do. The wisdom of our Lord was seen in His teaching. It was seen in the way He lived, and in His works among men. But it was always His purpose to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do.

What the Lord told Joshua as he took over from Moses, applied to our Lord, and it applies to us as well. I am referring to the words of our Lord found in Joshua 1:8 where it is recorded that He said,

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Our wisdom comes from God through His Word. We need to meditate on it, and then do what it says, if we are to prosper in the work which the Lord has given us to do. All of this is what it means to “deal prudently.” The Lord’s character and His life were without a single flaw. We can’t claim such a perfect record, but that should be our goal.

“He shall be exalted and extolled, and very high.” Here we see the outcome of our Lord’s ministry as the Father begins to describe it. One would never have realized that our Lord, Who had such a lowly beginning in His earthly life, would ever attain to such glory—a threefold exaltation.

Delitzsch said this:

The three verbs...consequently denote the commencement, and continuation, and the result or climax of the exaltation; and Stier is not wrong in recalling to mind the three principal steps of the exaltation in the historical fulfilment, viz. the resurrection, the ascension, and the sitting down at the right hand of God (II, 305).

And then he added that here we have “the servant of Jehovah, rising from stage to stage, reaches at last an immeasurable height, that towers above everything besides” (*Ibid.*).

Isn’t this what we are told in Eph. 1:19-23?

- 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
- 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
- 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
- 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
- 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We also have in that great passage on the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord in Phil. 2. The part which speaks of His exaltation is verses 9-11:

- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
- 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
- 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

And so, in speaking of the our Lord, the Father spoke of His exaltation first, and in the next verse of His humiliation.

52:14 What a contrast there is between verse 13 and verse 14. We see the glory first, which will be last in time, in order that we would not be overwhelmed with the terrible nature and extent of our Lord’s sufferings.

“As many were astonished [astonished, appalled, horrified] at thee,” probably referring to Israel. Perhaps this is a reference to what Moses warned the people of in Deut. 28:36-45:

- 36 The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.
- 37 And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.
- 38 Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it.
- 39 Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.
- 40 Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit.
- 41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.
- 42 All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.
- 43 The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.
- 44 He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.
- 45 Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:

The people of God became an astonishment to the nations because they claimed to be the people of God, and the inheritors of the many blessings He had given them, but because of their disobedience, God turned against them in judgment. So with the Messiah. With all of the great claims that were made for the Messiah, the coming King of Israel, His mutilation at the time of His death made people think that He was being judged because of His own wickedness. Look at the description which we have here in this verse.

“His visage was so marred more than any man, And His form than the sons of men.”

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Our Lord’s “visage” was *His appearance*. And for it to have been “marred,” means that because of all of the punishment He endured before He got to the Cross, *His body was disfigured*. That precious body which had been “prepared” for Him by the Father, had become so disfigured that, as it has been translated, “it no longer that of a man” (JFB, III, 728).

“His form more than the sons of men” is written parallel to “His visage was marred more than any man” to show how true this was, and what an accurate description of our Lord this is. In fact, the words express such intense suffering and affliction for our Lord Jesus Christ that *He became in His body from that time on, the definition of disfigurement!*

Delitzsch added to our understanding of this verse by his comment on these statements:

His appearance and his form were altogether distortion...away from men, out beyond men, *i.e.*, a distortion that destroys all likeness to a man (*Isaiah, II, p. 307*).

In Psalm 22, one of the Messianic Psalms which we considered, that which we could entitle, *the Psalm of the Cross*, we have these powerful, and yet tragic, words. (Read Psa. 22:1-22.)

David Baron made this illuminating comment about what the Spirit of God has told us in this verse:

By these strong words and expressions the Spirit of God seeks to give us a glimpse into the depth and *intensity* of the vicarious sufferings of our Saviour, and of the greatness of the cost of our redemption; and we contemplate this picture of the Man of Sorrows, with the "face" which for us was "marred" more than that of any man, and with His form bowed and disfigured more than the sons of men, may our hearts be stirred with shame and sorrow for the sin which was the cause of it all, and with greater love and undying gratitude to Him who bore all this for us! (*The Servant of Jehovah*, pp. 60, 61).

At this point it is good for us to go back to the opening words of verse 13, "Behold, My Servant." There we see Him in His future glory; here in verse 14 we see Him in His then-future sufferings, sufferings so terrible that it is practically impossible to state in the words of any language, the sufferings of our Lord as He "was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

But then, as we move on to verse 15, we see, referring again to what David Baron said, that "as His humiliation and sufferings were great, yea, 'more than that of any other man,' so also shall the blessed fruit and consequences of them be" (*Op. cit.*, p. 61).

52:15 "So shall He sprinkle many nations." Some, like Delitzsch, prefer the word "startle." But he admitted in his commentary that the language here is in favor of the word "sprinkle." Either way the word is translated, this statement is, of course, absolutely true. But it seems that what the Father would have us to understand in this verse has to do with the saving effect of the sufferings of our Lord. To "sprinkle" brings to mind the sprinkling of the blood on the Day of Atonement. And the significance of that sprinkling is stated for us in Lev. 16:30:

For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

It was a day of national cleansing for the people of Israel.

But our text goes beyond Israel. To be sure there will be many who will be redeemed in Israel, but it is to be seen throughout Scripture that God's purpose in salvation was never limited to the Jewish people. And here we are told that the Messiah Himself will "sprinkle many nations," a clear reference to the salvation of Gentiles. According to verse 14, the sufferings of the Servant of the Lord are so terrible and devastating, that one would wonder what, if anything, could be the result. But here we see how amazing the results were to be. God's people will come from every tongue and tribe and nation. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation "for the Jew first, but also for the Greek," or Gentiles. So the impact of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, generation after generation, will reach to the ends of the earth. And the Gospel will reach the highest among men, "kings," and it will reach the lowest.

Here we see our Lord Jesus Christ in His role as our great High Priest. As I stated in the beginning, we have in these verses both an introduction and a summary of what is to come in chapter 53. So it is fitting that the priestly ministry of our Lord should be referred to in this introduction since it is to have a larger and special emphasis in chapter 53 which follows.

"Kings shall shut their mouths at Him." Kings have often been the most outspoken in their opposition to the Gospel. And kings have often been responsible for the persecution of the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. But for many of them "that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard

shall they consider.” God will give many eyes to see, and ears to hear. And when He does, the opposition of kings is changed in faith, and we have another grand illustration of the grace of God. Kings will not change themselves, but they will, many of them, be changed by the grace and mercy of God Himself. That which is impossible with men, is possible with God. Cf. Luke 18:27.

The word “consider” means *to understand*. And to understand the Gospel is to believe the Gospel, and believing the Gospel is evidence of a heart that has been transformed.

February 9, 1998

II. THE LIFE AND SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD UPON THE EARTH (Isa. 53:1-9).

The first three verses of this section, which are the last three verses of chapter 52, are introductory, but the thought of the last of those verses (52:15) is carried over into the first verse of chapter 53. In 52:15 we see that “the kings of the earth shall shut their mouths at Him,” *i.e.*, the Messiah. They not only hear, but they will understand. However, when we move on to the ministry of Isaiah in particular to Israel, and also the ministry of his contemporaries, the situation in Israel is very different. And we see this in 53:1.

53:1 Please turn to Rom. 10. I would like to read the whole chapter to you because in it we have two quotations from this part of Isaiah’s prophecy, including Isa. 53:1. In Romans 9-11 Paul was dealing in a special way with the unbelief of Israel, not only in his own day, but throughout their history as a nation. The Gentiles were receptive when the Jews were not. The people of Israel heard the words of the prophets, but they did not understand and they did not believe.

We are told in Rom. 10:16 that Isa. 53:1 contains the words of Isaiah. He was grieved over Israel’s rejection of his message. The words, “our report,” have been translated as meaning, “that which we hear” (Baron, p. 67). Isaiah was not giving a message of his own invention, but he was giving the message which he himself had heard from God. It was a divine message, and thus it was true. It was a glorious message of salvation, but Israel in her blindness, refused to hear and could not hear. In the first part of this verse we see the attitude of the people, and in the latter part of the verse we see that the Lord was not working as Isaiah had wished that He were working. How Isaiah’s heart had been blessed beyond his ability to describe it, and he could not understand the failure of the people to hear what he had heard, the message which he had proclaimed to them. This is the heart cry of all who preach the Gospel. They run up against a solid wall of unbelief, and refuse to hear the most glorious message that has ever fallen upon the ears of men. The judgment which eventually fell upon Israel was not because they did not have the truth, but because they had it, and yet rejected it.

It is thought by many that the expression, “the arm of the Lord,” is a title of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. And it surely must be. It expresses power, the power of the Lord, and that power was never more evident than it was in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fausset in his commentary called Isaiah 53 “the fullest and the clearest of the prophecies concerning” our Lord (III, 733). And yet it was rejected by Israel.

Matthew Henry mentions how in 1 Pet. 1:11 and Luke 24:26-27 the emphasis is upon the twofold message of Christ in the OT: His sufferings, followed by His glory. And then MH said:

Nowhere in all the Old Testament are these two so plainly and fully prophesied of as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted with application to Christ in the New Testament. This chapter is so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah (IV, 300).

But it made no difference how clearly the message was proclaimed, still the people did not believe.

But notice how Isaiah handled the rejection of the people. He was grieved by it, and doubtless discouraged. *But he continued to minister the truth which he had heard from God.* What an example he is to us! And we see this same faithfulness in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, and which he sought to instill in the heart of his younger son in the ministry, Timothy. Listen to Paul’s words:

- 1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
- 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
- 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

How we can thank God today for His servants in the past who did not allow their ministry to be changed just because of the rejection of their hearers! And among those none stands taller or straighter than Isaiah the prophet.

And so he went on with his message, not spoken here, but written, and preserved by God Himself for all of the generations that have come and gone since then. But for the most part, the world has refused to listen to this glorious truth. We need to be praying continually as we come to the Word of God, that He will give us ears to hear. No wonder Paul rejoiced and thank God for the Thessalonian believers. Many of you have memorized his words:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

53:2 In this and the following verse we see some of the main reasons why the Lord was “despised and rejected of men.” These verses have to do with the whole course of our Lord’s ministry on earth.

“He shall grow up before Him” means that the Lord’s ministry on earth was continually blessed with the very presence of God, the Father. And the words “grow up” not only speak of our Lord’s physical growth from childhood to manhood, but of the ascending character of His work. He moved from a lowly birth to the Cross and then after His resurrection to the right hand of God.

The origin His life on earth is described as that of “a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.” He was like a sucker from old stock. As “a tender plant” it seemed that He was not likely to survive. One writer has said,

He appeared as a tender *plant* from the old trunk of Jesse. What is more insignificant than a small *branch*, a twig? Do they not appear silently and unheralded in spring by the millions? Who can become excited about a sprig? And who can believe in a sprig? Who can put his trust in it and place all his confidence in it? (Bultema, Harry, *Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 507).

The “root out of a dry ground” showed His lowly origin, and that He had nothing that would support Him, nor anything to indicate His greatness. The idea that the people had was that the Messiah would come in glory and with great power to set the people of Israel free. They had no conception of a Savior. The disciples loved and followed the Lord, but even they were offended and confused when He spoke to them about His death and His resurrection. It seems that the mission upon which our Lord came was not all in the minds of the people of

Israel. And His teaching only added to their dissatisfaction with Him. The concepts of meekness and lowliness were not included in their idea as to what their Messiah should be. So much for His origin. This is why Isaiah’s message found very few who believed him.

But then Isaiah spoke of our Lord’s physical appearance.

In this connection it is well for us to remember what we are told in Heb. 10:5:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

This was a reference to Ps. 40. The Father gave His Son the body that He had. The Lord was not handsome like Joseph, or Saul, or David. He had “no form nor comeliness.” “Form” had to do with the appearance and shape of His body. It is even said of Moses that when he was born he was “a goodly child. Stephen said in his message to the council in Jerusalem that when Moses was born he “was exceeding fair” (Acts 7:20). There never was a statement made like that about our Lord when He was born. It is said of David when Samuel anointed him as the next king of Israel, that “he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to” (1 Sam. 16:12). You never read anything like that about our Lord.

There was nothing about our Lord’s birth, nor about His growth to manhood, nor even about His public ministry that would attract the attention of the masses of the people. He was born in Bethlehem, but raised in Nazareth, and you will remember what Nathanael’s first reaction was to the Lord:

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see (John 1:45-46).

And remember the passage in Matthew’s Gospel where in His town He experienced rejection:

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:54-58).

One writer has stated it this way:

The heart of the thing, that men did not see the beauty that was there; He did not answer to their ideal; He lacked the qualities which they admired; His greatness was not shaped to their thoughts. Having misread the prophecies, having imagined another Deliverer than God had promised, being blind to the heavenly, while their souls lay open to the carnal and earthly, they found nothing worth gazing upon in Jehovah’s Servant when He came. They would have welcomed a plumed and mail-clad warrior, riding forth to battle against the oppressor... They had no admiration and no welcome for One Who comes, meek and lowly, to make His soul an offering for sin, and to be God’s salvation to the end of the earth. It was not sin that troubled them: how should a Saviour from sin delight them? What was there in a Bringer-in of righteousness to inspire such hearts? (Culross quoted in Baron, p. 73).

Isaiah continued, “And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” Fausset said, The studied reticence of the New Testament as to His form, stature, color, &c., was designed to prevent our dwelling on the bodily rather than on His moral beauty, holiness, love, &c.; also a providential

protest against the making and veneration of images of Him (III, 729).

What a reminder this is to us of what Isaiah said in Isa. 55:

- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
- 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- 10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:
- 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:8-11).

There was nothing about our Lord's beginnings on earth, nor His family, nor in His appearance that would attract men who are more inclined to look upon the outward appearance than they are upon the heart. But to the child of God there none who can even begin to compare with the moral beauty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How we should thank God for giving us eyes to see, as the apostles did. Peter spoke for them when he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

The description of our Lord goes on in verse 3.

53:3 Here we learn that not only were people not attracted to our Lord, but they were turned away in disgust, they were offended by Him.

Twice in this verse we are told that the Messiah would be despised. He was held in contempt. They scorned Him. They refused to associate with Him, and His enemies were not satisfied until they had seen Him nailed to the Cross. He was “rejected of men.”

He was “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” We have no evidence in the Gospels that our Lord ever laughed. This would not mean that it was depressing for His own people to be around Him, but it does mean that unregenerate people did not seek His company. “A man of sorrows” means that this was His distinguishing characteristic. The Apostle Paul was like his Lord in this connection. Let me remind you of what was written in Rom. 9 about this, verses 1-3:

- 1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
- 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
- 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3).

Listen to what our Lord did on one occasion when He stood above the city, and looked over it:

- 41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
- 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes (Luke 19:41-42).

And who can forget what happened in Gethsemane?

- 41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,
- 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.
- 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
- 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:41-44).

And then remember that passage on the sufferings of our Lord in Heb. 5:5-10:

- 5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.
- 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
- 7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;
- 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;
- 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;
- 10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Why wouldn't our Lord be "a Man of sorrows"? Did He not understand better than anyone else what it meant to be a sinner, under the judgment of God, destined for hell? Does it not grieve us when we see people going merrily through life without a thought of God, or eternity, living as if they were going to live forever? And was He not aware of the terrible price He was going to pay the sins which would be charged to Him when He would die at Calvary? It is amazing in a world like ours that there is any joy! Our Lord more than anyone who ever lived was "acquainted with grief." The word "grief" is a Hebrew word for *sickness*. But it seems that it used here of all of the calamities that come upon us because of our sins.

Spurgeon made an interesting comment about our Lord as "a Man of sorrows":

The expression is intended to be very emphatic, it is not "a sorrowful man," but "a Man of sorrows," as if He were made up of sorrows, and they were constituent elements of His being. Some are men of pleasure, others men of wealth, but He was "a Man of sorrows." He and sorrow might have changed names. He who saw Him, saw sorrow, and he who would see sorrow, must look at Him (Vol. 19, p. 125).

The latter part of this verse probably should read, "As one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

From this last statement in the verse, we can ask ourselves, "What value do we place upon the Lord Jesus Christ?" It seems that the human race is divided into two groups: those who despise the Lord, and count him as nothing, or those to whom the Lord is more precious than anyone else. Baron wrote, speaking of the way men in general think about our Lord:

Instead of counting Him dear and worthy, we formed a very low estimate of Him, or rather we did not estimate Him at all, or, as Luther forcibly expresses it: "We estimated Him at nothing" (p. 81).

So we can see from verses 2 and 3 why Isaiah asked the question which he did in verse 1. This is the natural man's view of Christ. As we go into the next verse we see the explanation of our Lord's sorrows, and this is how those who know the Lord understand His Person and His Work here on earth.

The great doctrine of substitution is prominent in verses 4, 5, and 6.

53:4 We have in verses 2 and 3 man's mistaken, tragically mistaken, views of Christ. Their understanding was altogether erroneous. Because He was not physically attractive, the people were not attracted to Him. Nor did He come from a prominent family. This is what is told us in verse 2.

In verse 3 we see His sorrows. Yet the people had no idea that His death in any way involved them. It has always been a common idea among men that if a man suffered greatly, it was because he was a very bad person. This is what Job's friends tried to tell him. Perhaps you will remember the words of Eliphaz, the Temanite which are recorded for us in Job 4:7-9:

- 7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?
- 8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.
- 9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed (Job 4:7-9).

Or remember how the Lord tried to correct this idea in the minds of the Jews of His own day. The account is in Luke 13:1-5:

- 1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
- 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
- 3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
- 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
- 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

That same idea surfaced with the disciples as we learn from John 9:1-3:

- 1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.
- 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?
- 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

And it was apparent in Acts 28 when a viper attached itself to the hand of the Apostle Paul:

- 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.
- 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.
- 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.
- 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god (Acts 28:3-6).

And this idea prevailed among the people in our Lord's day according to two Messianic Psalms. Cf. Psalms 41:7-9:

- 7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.
- 8 An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
- 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

The same idea is in Psalm 71:10-11:

- 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
- 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.

So these are the ideas that we find in verses 2 and 3. People by nature are in error about the Person of Christ, and also about the sufferings of Christ.

But the word "surely" with which verse 4 begins, indicates that these are now the true facts about Christ. This is what we need to understand about the Messiah. People may grow up with many different ideas about Christ,

but here we are going to learn the truth. This word “surely” serves the same purpose as our Lord’s often repeated use of the word, “Verily,” or, Verily, verily.” Isaiah here gives us the real cause of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and of His suffering. It was not because of His own sin that He suffered, but because of the sins of His people.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” Both of the main words used here, we met in verse 3: “Sorrows” and “griefs.” “Griefs,” I trust that you will remember, means *sicknesses*, but, as I mentioned earlier, probably speak of all of the calamities connected with sin.

February 10, 1998

And so in this verse we have the explanation for all that the Messiah suffered as described in verses 2 and 3.

Fausset in commenting on the word “borne” says that it means two things:

- 1) That He took our griefs upon Himself.
- 2) That He took our griefs away.

This points to the vicarious nature of our Lord’s sufferings as is also described in several of the following verses: vv. 5, 6, 8, and 12.

Cf. the quotation of this verse in Matt. 8:16-17. This does not mean that our Lord has taken away our diseases in the same way that He has taken our sins, but in His ministry on earth He did, in a most amazing way, heal the diseases of the people, which showed His greater ability to deal with their greater needs, the sins of the people. And it evidently was through His healing of the body that many came to know His healing of the soul. But since sickness and death followed sin in the Garden of Eden, sicknesses (“griefs”) are also used to represent, in a figurative way, the sins which caused them. Quoting Fausset again, “Sin and sickness are ethically connected as cause and effect” (III, 730).

So the truth about the sufferings of the Messiah is that He did not die for His own sins, as many people believed, but He died for the sins of His people. And here in verse 4 it is the sins of His people in Israel which is the primary thought.

But then, in the latter part of the verse, the great truth of the vicarious, substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus comes to the forefront. When the Messiah died, it was as One “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Delitzsch commented here that “the name Jehovah would have been out of place here, where the evident intention is to point to the all-determining divine power generally, whose vengeance appeared to have fallen on this particular sufferer” (II, 317). God, as the Judge of all men, was dealing with His Son to deliver those from judgment who were to be His people.

Culross, again quoted by Baron, made the following clear statement about the sufferings of our Lord:

Among the Jews, the idea of vicarious suffering was far from strange; the sacrificial system distinctly expressed it. Sin (said the sacrificial system) is an offence unspeakably odious to God, which He cannot look upon, but must punish. Death is the due punishment of sin. But God has no pleasure in the sinner’s death. He is full of mercy, and has Himself opened up a channel, through sacrifice, whereby sin may be expiated, and pardon granted in righteousness. The sacrifices under the Law had no intrinsic efficacy to put away sin; but only symbolized substitution—the substitution of Jehovah’s righteous Servant in place of the guilty. Men may indeed exclaim against the propriety of one suffering for others, and may insist that every man be wounded for his own transgressions and bruised for his own iniquities. But there is no moral reason, so far as I can see, to forbid love from voluntarily stepping in

and suffering for others, to save them from badness and misery. Now in this prophecy, here is One suffering for sins which He never committed—enduring what others deserved—standing in the transgressor’s place, as if Himself the transgressor (Baron, pp. 90, 91).

Is it any wonder that Isaiah said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed”? It ought to seem incredible to us that the Son of God would become a Man in order that He might offer Himself for their sins, taking their sins as though they were His own, and carrying them away with such finality that they would never be charged against the sinner again. This is love beyond anything that man could possibly have considered. How humbling even the thought is, and how our hearts should be full of praise to God continually that He has not charged us with our own sins, but has imputed them to His dear Son.

And when it comes to explaining what was taking place on the Cross, we have the description in the Scriptures of His physical sufferings which could be seen by men, *but hidden from the eyes of man the Lord was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”* What did that mean to our Lord, and what did it mean to God, only eternity can possibly reveal. And in this connection, look ahead to verse 10 here in Isa. 53. (Read.) It does not mean that the Father took pleasure in the suffering of His Son, but that it was because of what the Son was accomplishing for guilty, condemned, and otherwise hopeless sinners. And the same was true of the Son. Cf. Heb. 12:2.

All of this is the truth about the Servant of the Lord. Nothing less than what is declared here is the right explanation. Our Lord did not die for His own sins because He had none. Nor did He die just at the hands of men. He was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

The word “esteem” here in verse 4 is the same word that we had in verse 3: “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” Whereas before they turned away from Him, and considered Him of no value at all, now with their eyes opened by the grace of God, they understood Who it was Who died (speaking prophetically), and why it was necessary. “Stricken” means that God violently laid His hand upon His Son. “Smitten of God” means that God by His own hand upon Son, struck Him so that He died. “Afflicted” points to the personal shame that was laid upon the Lord for Him to die as He did. Many never believed anything else than that He died for His own sins, and this was, and is, a part of the shame that He experienced. Again remember Heb. 12:2, “Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross...”

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53:5 Isaiah gave us four statements in this verse connected with the suffering and death of the Messiah. The first, “But He was wounded for our transgressions.” The ideas here are full of Gospel truth. “Wounded” means *wounded mortally*. That is, He died. He was pierced through. He was defiled and polluted by our transgressions. Our transgressions were charged to Him, and He died as though He were the guilty one.

Girdlestone, in his book, *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 81, said that this word in Hebrew “signifies to revolt or refuse subjection to rightful authority.” It pictures man in rebellion against God. Time and time again all sinners have revolted against the Word of God, against the Law of God. And here we see the One Who always did what was pleasing to the Father, portrayed as One Who was the greatest of rebels. But the truth is that He suffered and died for our rebellion. Our transgressions were charged against Him.

The second statement is, “He was bruised for our iniquities.” “Bruised” means *crushed and broken*. In William Wilson’s *Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 57, he said that this word “designates the most severe inward and outward sufferings. And Delitzsch (II, 318) said concerning the expressions in this verse, “There

were no stronger expressions to be found in the [Hebrew] language, to denote a violent and painful death." And Delitzsch continued:

The meaning is not that it was our sins and iniquities that pierced Him through like swords, and crushed Him like heavy burdens, but that He was pierced and crushed on account of our sins and iniquities. It was not His own sins and iniquities, but *ours*, which He had taken upon Himself, that He might make atonement for them in our stead, that were the cause of His having to suffer so cruel and painful a death (*Ibid.*).

For the word "iniquities," Brown, Driver, and Briggs suggest the word, *depravity*. Our Lord paid in full the penalty for all of our corrupt practices. He died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Our Lord was typified under the OT sacrifices every time an innocent animal was slain for the sins of guilty people.

The third expressions is: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." This statement could be translated, "the chastisement which leads to our peace." Sin always calls for punishment, and the punishment is set by God in accord with our sin. And yet we read in Psa. 103:10, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." But that is never said about our Lord when He was made an offering for our sins. *The full penalty of our sins was laid upon our Lord! He was not spared anything that we should have suffered. And because of His all-sufficient sacrifice, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).*

To have peace with God is the great doctrine of reconciliation. Think of the following verses:

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:10).

Also 2 Cor. 5:18-21:

- 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
- 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
- 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

When the Lord wept over Jerusalem, He was lamenting over the fact that they did not know where their true peace was found. Listen to Luke's record of that event:

- 41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
- 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.
- 43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,
- 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation (Luke 19:41-44).

Oh, the terrible price that our Lord had to pay to purchase our peace with God!

The fourth and last statement in this verse: "And with His stripes we are healed." Because of our sins, as Delitzsch said,

We were sick unto death...; but He, the sinless One, took upon Himself a suffering unto death, which was, as it were, the concentration and essence of the woes that we had deserved; and this voluntary endurance, this submission to the justice of the Holy One, in accordance with the counsels of divine love, became the source of our healing” (II, 319, 320).

Every physical healing which the Lord performed while He was here on earth, pictured our salvation. All are born in sin, and sick unto death. And every case is hopeless. We can't heal ourselves, and when we have tried all other ways to spiritual health, leave us not better, but worse, after we have depleted all the resources that we have. See Luke 5:25-26. Only Christ can heal us, and He heals us from the sickness of sin forever! But it is only by “His stripes,” *i.e., the wounds He suffered at the hands of God.*

And so this fifth verse of Isaiah 53 pictures us as rebels against God, criminals against God, depraved, enemies of God, and incurably sick with sin. And the remedy for each condition is Christ, and Christ alone!

53:6 This very, very familiar verse pictures us, in addition to the above, as *lost, lost sheep*. There is nothing more pitiful, nothing more helpless and hopeless and defenseless than a lost sheep.

The condition that Isaiah was proclaiming here is universally true of all people, regardless of race, nationality, or religion. It applies to every generation. It is true of every person who has ever lived with our Lord as the one exception. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Let us take it just that far for the moment.

We must all face the fact that we are not only sinners by nature, but we are sinners by choice. This is the confession of people who have at last seen their problem, and have confessed their need. But in every generation there are countless numbers who have never seen their real need.

What does it mean that we have “gone astray”? It means that we have turned away from God. We do not seek Him; we want to have our own way. People have not all gone away in the same direction, but in countless numbers of ways—all of our own choosing. We have a will that is free to choose and follow that which is wrong, but we are in bondage to the wrong but do not know it. To go astray is to wander, usually going this way and then another way, trying this and trying that, with no sense of direction, no knowledge of where we have come from, or where we are going. And implied in this word is the idea of being misled, and continually doing the wrong thing. Psalm 58:3 tells us this: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” In Paul's quotations from the OT in Romans 3 he describes more fully how we have all gone astray:

- 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
- 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
- 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
- 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
- 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
- 17 And the way of peace have they not known:
- 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10-18).

We turn from the right way and choose the wrong way. And we place ourselves in constant danger because of

the fact that we are astray from God.

“We have turned every one to his own way.” We do what we want to do, not what God wants us to do. But at the same time we do not know that we are slaves to our sin. Cf. Eph. 2:1-3:

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

It is true of all of us that we “like sheep have gone astray.” But we have not all gone in the same direction, except that we have gone away from God. But in going astray we all have sinned in our own way. And sometimes the fact that a person has not sinned in the same way that others have sinned, he gives himself a false sense of security. We all need to learn that having gone astray from God, it makes no difference which way we go, we are away from God. Spurgeon pointed out in a sermon on this text that sheep have an inclination to go astray. If there is a break in the hedge, or a part missing in a fence, sheep will find it, and go through it. They don’t know where they are going, but they just go! And it seems that the longer we live, the farther we go away from God.

But the amazing truth of the Gospel is that while as sheep we go astray, and have no desire at all to seek the Lord, and subject ourselves to all kinds of dangers, yet the Lord has had mercy upon us by doing what has been described in verses 4 and 5. He has caused our sins to meet upon His Son. The Father “hath laid on” His Son “the iniquity of us all.” And this word “iniquity” is the same word that we have in verse 5, “iniquities.” And there we learned that it speaks of our depravity. In going astray we not only go away, but we go down. A life without God is never a life that is going up, but it is always going down.

So we are pictured as having chosen our own way instead of God’s way, and, in doing so, we have wandered farther and farther from God, without His care, without the protection that He gives, and we subject ourselves to all kinds of evil. But the Lord has stepped in, without a single request from us because by nature we are too stupid to seek His help, but He lays the penalty upon His Son which belonged to us, and through what He has done to His Son, we are brought into the fold of salvation.

Notice the words at the beginning of this verse, “All we,” and the words at the end of the verse, “us all.” God has an elect people that He is bringing to Himself. It is for their sins that the Lord Jesus died. If He had died for all men without exception, then would they not all be saved? Is it possible that Christ would pay for the sins of all men, and then those who are not saved would have to spend eternity paying for them all again? Let us be reminded of what our Lord said in John 10 about His sheep. Please turn to John 10, and follow in your Bibles as I read beginning with verse 24:

- 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.
- 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.
- 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.
- 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
- 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
- 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one (John 10:24-30).

Sheep do not seek the shepherd, but it is the shepherd who seeks the sheep. Sinners do not seek God, but God seeks sinners. But depraved sinners do not choose God, so God chooses those whom He will, and He then draws them to Himself. Our Lord taught this when He said the words which we find in John 6. First verse 44:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

And then John 6:37:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Because of what it means that we have gone astray, there would be no hope that anyone would be saved if it were left to people to seek the Lord. God seeks the sinners, opens their eyes and hearts to the truth, shows them that Christ is the Savior, the only Savior, and then draws them to Himself. He is mighty enough to bring anyone to Himself. The fact that any come, is a testimony, not to man's intelligence and ability to come, but a testimony to the power of God to save even the chief of sinners.

After we are saved, then we can say what David said in Psalm 23. (Quote.)

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53:7 David Baron pointed out, and rightly so, that the next three verses set forth the voluntary nature of our Lord's sufferings and death. The words that are used here, combined with the words we have already had describing the passion of our Lord, indicate very clearly that, as terrible as the sufferings of the Lord were to the human observer, there was even greater suffering which men could not see when “the Lord...laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And the terrible nature of our Lord's sufferings indicate how equally terrible our sins are before God. For the Lord to submit willingly to all that He suffered on the Cross is evidence of two things:

- 1) Our Lord's willing submission to His Father's will because of His love for the Father.
- 2) His love for the people He died for.

Paul was speaking of the Father's love in Rom. 5:7 and 8, but the same could be said about Christ:

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Christ also commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, He died for us.*

“He was oppressed” indicated that His enemies treated Him like fiends! They pursued Him like wild animals would, intent upon the kill. “And He was afflicted.” They did everything to put Him down. They wanted to humiliate Him “into the dust,” so to speak, and that is what they did. It was as though they were doing everything that they possibly could to “exact” from Him a payment for what they considered to be His own sins. They were acting as the judges, and He was in their eyes the criminal Who was paying for His crimes. These words give us a picture of unspeakable violence.

But it is those words which describe our Lord's reaction which are so amazing: “Yet He opened not His mouth.” And it repeated at the end of this verse. But before we look at the second time this statement is found here in Isa. 53:7, let us look at the other statements here in verse 7.

“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her hearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Delitzsch called attention in these words to “the voluntary endurance” of the Lord in being led “as a lamb to the slaughter,” and to His submissive quiet bearing” in that He was like a lamb, dumb before His

shearers. See II, 323. However, lambs are not tortured before they are slaughtered like our Lord was tortured. They go to the slaughter not expecting what is about to happen. But with our Lord it was different. He knew that He was not only to suffer from the cruelty of men before He got to the Cross, but that He would suffer in addition the death of the Cross. He was silent even though He knew what was ahead.

I think I have read this passage from 1 Peter to you before, but I want to read it again because it describes what Isaiah was saying here in this verse. Isaiah was speaking prophetically; Peter was speaking historically. Here are Peter's words:

- 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:
- 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
- 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

You may remember that it was this part of Isaiah 53 that had attracted the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch when Philip joined him in his chariot. See Acts 8:32-33:

- 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
- 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

The writer of Hebrews referred to this behavior of our Lord, and like Peter, indicated that we are to follow the Lord's example:

- 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
- 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:3-4).

It is natural to retaliate, if not in words, at least in the feelings we have in our hearts when we are falsely accused. Our Lord's reaction to all of the accusations of His enemies baffled Pilate as well. This is what we read in John 19:9-11:

- 9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.
- 10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?
- 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Even when the Lord was hanging on the Cross, the accusations continued:

- 39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,
- 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.
- 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,
- 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.
- 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.
- 44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth (Matt. 27:39-44).

But what was our Lord’s response to all of the reviling that was thrown at Him? This was His prayer from the Cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

B. W. Newton, who I believe was connected with the Plymouth Brethren, made this comment which is quoted by David Baron, pp. 99, 100:

The object of the whole passage is to mark the meek and quiet submission of our Redeemer in His prolonged suffering. He was the subject of cruel and unjust oppression, yet His persecutors were not crushed. God allowed them to pursue their course and to accumulate sorrows on the head of the Holy One; and He patiently and meekly bowed His head to the infliction, and opened not His mouth.

Culross, another writer quoted by Baron (p. 100), had this to say:

When we suffer, writes one, how hard we find it to be still! The flames of resentment—how they leap up in our bosom, and flush our cheek with angry red! What impatience there often is, what murmuring, what outcry, what publishing of our sorrow! Or if there is silence, it is at times akin to stoicism, the proud determination not to let men see how we feel. But the spirit of the Servant [our Lord] is loftier and grander unutterably. In sublime and magnanimous silence He endures to the uttermost, sustained by His mighty purpose and by the conviction, *Jehovah wills it*. I see the temper of His mind in this silence; I see His strength, I see His rest in God; and I look down into the unfathomed mystery of Love. He came to do what only Love was equal to—that is abundantly clear—and He shrank from no suffering; raised not His arm, opened not His mouth, in His own defence, wearied not, fainted not, but was dumb with silence.

And to these David Baron added his own words:

But we may, I believe, go a step further. In this wonderful patience and silence of the Servant [our Lord]—which in the history of fulfilment was exhibited in the silence of our Lord Jesus before the Jewish Sanhedrin and before the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate—we see not only His lamb-like meekness and “His love for man, which made Him content to suffer for our redemption,” but *His acquiescence in the justice of God* in the punishment of sin, the whole burden of which He bore. To the Christian this verse is specially precious because of the prominence given to it in the New Testament. Not only was it “from this Scripture” the evangelist Philip “preached Jesus” unto the Ethiopian eunuch; and not only does the Apostle Peter use it as the basis of his exhortation to believers to be patient in suffering and to follow the example of Him, “Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously”; but, as Delitzsch truly observes, “All the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God...*spring from this passage in the book of Isaiah* (pp. 101, 102).

5:8 This verse has probably caused more trouble for expositors than any other in this section of Isaiah. And that is because of the different ways the words in this verse can be used. But the meaning seems to be, as Fausset stated it in his commentary, that “He was treated as One so mean that a fair trial was denied Him.” And then Fausset went on to say that even though both His betrayer and His judge [Pilate] declared Him to be innocent, His enemies proceeded to rush Him from imprisonment and on through an unfair trial on to death by crucifixion. See III, 731.

But it was not only the officials among Jews and Gentiles who were responsible for His death, but it was also the people of His own generation. “Who shall declare His generation?” The point is that it seems impossible to describe the wickedness of that generation which added to His sufferings by all of their jeering, and enjoyed the spectacle of seeing Him die! Surely you would think that every person who had any part in the death of the Lord Jesus would be placed completely beyond any hope of salvation. Both Jews and Gentiles had a part in the

greatest crime that was ever committed—the death of the Son of God! “He was cut off out of the land of the living,” implying as Fausset has said, “a violent death” (III, 731). So His arrest, His trials (which were a mockery), and His death, from a human point of view, were a violation of all that was righteous and true. And yet from the divine point of view (and this is nothing but the grace of God), “for the transgression of my people was He stricken.” It was not for our Lord’s transgression. He was the spotless Lamb of God. But He died vicariously for the sins of, as Isaiah said, “my people.”

And so again we come to the theme which runs through this great passage of Scripture that our Lord died an innocent Victim, never having sinned, but His death by the wickedness of men, was under the sovereign hand of God, Who had laid upon His Son the sins of all who would ever be saved.

5:9 The first part of this verse could be translated, *It was determined by His enemies that he should be buried with wicked men, but instead He was with the rich in His death.* From the time of our Lord’s arrest, throughout His trials, and finally in His death, our Lord suffered unjustly the greatest humiliation at the hands of men. And it was their intention that the Lord would be buried with other criminals so that His humiliation would be complete. But that is where God the Father drew the line. The sacrifice was over. Our Lord’s humiliation was complete. And in the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ we see the first indication of His coming glory. I am sure that you all remember the situation regarding our Lord’s burial, but let me read it to you again. It was so amazing, and so much in contrast with all that had gone before, that it is recorded for us in all four of the Gospels! This is the Apostle John’s record of what happened:

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand (John 19:38-42).

Luke tells us that Joseph was “a counselor,” meaning that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, that he was “good” and “just,” and that he “waited for the kingdom of God. See Luke 23:50-52. We are also told by Luke that Joseph of Arimathaea had not agreed with the rest of the Sanhedrin about what they decided to do with the Lord. So here he was, one of the rulers of the Jews, along with another Pharisee, Nicodemus, both of them secret believers. But just at the very moment when their influence was to be felt, and the Lord delivered from a grave with the wicked, both Joseph and Nicodemus “came out of the closet,” so to speak, and, as John Mark recorded for us, “boldly” asked for the body of the Lord Jesus for burial. I doubt very much if either of them knew that they were fulfilling prophecy, and actually becoming servants of God in marking the first stage in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. There came the moment when all fear of man and the consequences of what they were about to do, was taken from them, and they pled for the body of the Lord in such a way that Pilate could not refuse them. And so our Lord was “with the rich in His death.” But this was not just a regular rich man, but a godly rich man, one whose faith was in the Lord Jesus Christ. And remember what the Lord had taught about the salvation of the rich, that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter in to the Kingdom of heaven. But here was a rich man who had entered in, drawn by the Lord Himself, and publicly declaring himself to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus at probably what was the worst possible time—at the time of the Lord’s crucifixion.

The last part of verse 9 seems to be in contrast with the preceding statements, and yet a moment's reflection on those words will show to us that the fact that our Lord “had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth,” were the very reasons that our Lord was qualified to die the death that He died, “the just for the unjust” (1 Pet. 3:18). *There was never any sin in what the Lord Jesus did, nor was there ever any sin in what the Lord Jesus did!* And this was not just because He kept Himself from sinning, but because, as the Apostle John was to write later, “in Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5b). Our Lord was accused, but falsely accused, of sin. And His burial in the tomb of Joseph was a testimony from God Himself that His Son was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15b).

What an amazing story this is of the sovereignty of God! The things that are impossible with men, are possible with our God. How amazing are the ways of the Lord, “past finding out.”

As we come to verse 10 we have reached the third in our division of this great Messianic passage. Let me review the points for you:

I. THE INTRODUCTION (Isa. 52:13-15). This is a summary, or a survey, of what we are to find in chapter 53. We have our Lord's glory mentioned first, then His sufferings, and then the fruit of His sufferings even among the Gentiles. And in these verses we have God the Father speaking about His Son.

II. THE LIFE AND SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD UPON THE EARTH (Isa. 53:1-9). The emphasis in the first three verses is upon the humanity of our Lord, His beginning, His life, and His grief. This is followed in verses 4 through 9 with a revelation of His vicarious sufferings. He suffered and died, not for His own sins, for He had none, but for the sins of His people.

Now in coming to the third point we have:

III. THE FATHER'S COMPLETE SATISFACTION WITH THE WORK OF HIS SON (Isa. 53:10-12).

53:10 In verse 4 we were told that the Servant of Jehovah, Whom we now know to be our Lord Jesus Christ, was “smitten of God, and afflicted.” Here, at the beginning of this last section, we read that “it pleased the Lord [Jehovah] to bruise Him.” Of all of the amazing teaching that we find in Scripture, would we not agree that this is the most amazing? It pleased the Father to bruise His Son.

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Closely connected with these statements is the truth expressed at the end of verse 6: “And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

For it to please the Father to bruise His Son, did not mean that the Father got pleasure out of seeing His Son suffer as He did, but it all had to do with what the Son accomplished by His death. What a testimony this is to the amazing love of God for sinners! This helps us to understand the word “so” in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world...” And Rom. 5:8, “But God commendeth His love toward us...”

“He hath put Him to grief,” that is, the Father had done this to His Son. We know that men inflicted such terrible sufferings upon the Lord Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, but behind it all God was dealing with His Son for the sins of His people. The word “grief” is the same word that we had back in verse 4, “Surely He hath borne our griefs.” It is a Hebrew word for sickness. But it speaks of all of the calamities which sin caused. The Father placed upon His Son the full payment for sin. His sacrifice was sufficient in itself, requiring nothing to be added later. And this was done because the Father made “His soul,” the soul of His Son, the life

of His Son, “an offering for sin.” Our Lord became the One in Whom all of the sin and trespass offerings of the OT found their fulfillment.

For the Lord’s soul to be made an offering for sin is equivalent to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:21 when he said that our Lord “was made sin for us.” Our sins were imputed to Him in such a way that it was as though they were His own sins.

But there is a glorious change that takes place in the middle of verse 10 beginning with the words, “He shall see His seed.” This means that the Lord Jesus will see the fruit of His death. The Jews thought that they were putting an end to Jesus of Nazareth when they were able to condemn Him to death, and to see Him crucified. But out of the sorrow and tragedy of that death, He would arise to a most glorious victory. “His seed” are the redeemed of Israel and of the Gentile nations, people who have found forgiveness and cleansing and eternal life through the sacrifice of the Son of God. And the thief on the Cross (as far as we know) was the first trophy of the grace of God. Three thousand more were to follow the preaching of the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. And from that day to this God in His grace has, through that sacrifice of His Son, been claiming His elect throughout the earth in every generation. And today we can still declare with the Apostle Paul that we have no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel because it is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). That which our Lord’s enemies thought was *their* victory, because the greatest possible triumph of the Son of God.

David Baron made this excellent comment:

“The Messiah’s “seed,” of which the spirit of prophecy speaks here, is the glorious *spiritual* progeny which He has begotten with “the travail of His soul;” and the new family which He came to found, and which sprang, so to say, at His resurrection out of His empty tom, is the new “seed of Israel,” or the Household of faith. This spiritual “seed”—the “bringing of many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10)—was the chief joy which was set before Him, for the sake of which He endured the cross, despising the shame. Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit; and the Church of Christ, consisting of the multitude of the redeemed out of all nations, Jew and Gentile—which was born when He died, and which looks back to Him as the source of its life and the origin of its being—is the continuous living witness to this truth (p. 122).

But “His seed” was not the only victory. “He shall prolong His days.” In Rev. 1:18 we read these glorious words of our Lord:

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

We read also in Rom. 6:8-10,

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Our Lord’s days have been *prolonged* for all eternity! Peter spoke of this when the Spirit of God moved so powerfully on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord. Here are his words:

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he

should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Acts 2:22-27).

And, as Heb. 7:25 teaches us, the resurrection of our Lord is essential to our own salvation:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But there is a third statement that we must not overlook in Isa. 53:10. It is, “And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His [the Messiah’s] hand.” This was, as Delitzsch has said,

That He should be the Mediator of a new covenant, and the restorer of Israel, the light of the Gentiles and [the] salvation of Jehovah even to the ends of the earth (II, 335).

David Baron spoke of it in this way:

This then, in brief, is the pleasure of Jehovah which shall prosper in His hand, or be brought to a triumphant accomplishment through His mediation, namely, the regathering of Israel, the bringing back of Jacob, not only to his land but into new covenant relationship with God, of which He Himself will be the bond; the illumination of the Gentile world with the light of the knowledge of the true and living God; the establishing of justice and judgment in the earth; the deliverance of men from spiritual blindness and the bondage of sin, and the bring near of God’s salvation to all men throughout the whole world, even “unto the end of the earth” (p. 125).

“The pleasure of the Lord” was the subject of the Apostle Paul’s praise in the first chapter of Ephesians, verses 3-14. (Read.)

Man has always been intent on either ignoring God and His will, or of intentionally seeking to stand in God’s way of the accomplishing of His purposes, but all is to no avail. Our God is sovereign, and His will is going to prevail until every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

53:11

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53:11 Delitzsch says concerning the last two verses of this great Messianic section, “The prophecy now leaves the standpoint of Israel’s retrospective acknowledgment of the long rejected Servant of God, and becomes once more the prophetic organ of God Himself, who acknowledges the Servant as His own” (II, 335). In the opening words of this verse, we have the equivalent of what the writer of Hebrews would write concerning our Lord’s joy in dying on the Cross. He certainly did not enjoy the suffering, but it was for “the joy that was set before Him” that “He endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2b).

“He shall see of the travail of His soul.” This means that He will see the results, the fruit, of the travail of His soul. When He died on Calvary’s Cross, He had finished the work which the Father had sent Him to do, and because of His death salvation was guaranteed for all for whom He died. We read in verse 10 that “He shall see His seed.” His death was more than an offer, or a provision for people to take it or leave it. It made certain

the salvation of the people whom God had chosen and had given to His Son. We can't imagine that such statements as these would be found in Scripture if the death of Christ were only a provision, but with no guarantee at all that anyone would be saved—which would have been the case if God had left it up to men to come to Christ on their own. The Scriptures make it perfectly clear that “there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:11, quoted from Psa. 14 and Psa. 53). God made the soul of His Servant “an offering for sin,” and both the Father and the Son were satisfied with the results.

Let me remind you that this is the main issue concerning the work of Christ. Did it satisfy God, or not? Many men have come up with their own ideas about salvation, and how people get right with God. But the question that they all need to answer is, What does God think about it? Is He satisfied that sinners can be saved with any other way of salvation? He came to do the will of the Father, and that was His primary objective in His death on the Cross. And He was “satisfied” that He accomplished what He came to do, *and so was the Father!*

What is the meaning of the word “travail”? Most often it is translated *labor* in the OT. It was miserable and painful and grievous to our Lord. It would be impossible to measure the nature of His sufferings, or the extent of them. A very inadequate illustration of the meaning of this word “travail” is not like the labor of a woman in bearing a child, as difficult as that usually is, but the labor of a farmer who spends weeks in the field, working early and late until his strength is spent, but who considers it worth it all when he is able to reap an abundant harvest.

And notice that for our Lord it was not just the suffering of the body, as intense and terrible as that was, but it was “the travail of His soul.” Hidden from the eyes of man, God made His Son, the sinless One, “sin for us.” He made His soul an offering for sin.

And the Lord Jesus was “satisfied.” The Father was “satisfied,” but also the Son was “satisfied”! This meant that the Lord Jesus by His death had satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God, so that any and all who would come for salvation, would find that in Christ's sacrifice there was more than enough to meet the needs of any sinner who would come seeking salvation.

“Satisfied” meant that the Lord had done everything necessary for the salvation of sinners. Nothing could be added because nothing needed to be added. And in dealing with this word “satisfied,” we are dealing with *the great doctrine of propitiation*. Christ was satisfied, and God was satisfied, and nothing from that day to this has changed that great truth, *and nothing ever will!*

The early verses of Isa. 2 tell us why the Lord was satisfied with His death. He did not die in vain. Let me read to you from Isa. 2:1-5:

- 1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
- 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.
- 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
- 5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

And the Apostle John gave us another passage which would show why our Lord was satisfied, and why the

Father was satisfied. Listen to what the Apostle John wrote:

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-14).

But let us bring this great truth down to ourselves. The Lord was satisfied, and the Father was satisfied, because they knew that what the Son had done in coming to this earth as a Man, and dying the Cross as our Substitute, meant that we, the chosen of God, would also most certainly be saved.

The Apostle John wrote,

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

And the Apostle John added in 1 John 4:10:

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The Lord did not do a partial work, leaving it up to us to complete the work of salvation. He did it all, and we owe all to Him.

But moving on... “By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many.” The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ leads to the complete salvation of all of those for whom Christ died. The Father here said “many,” not all. It doesn’t occur to many people, even many Christians, that God never did intend to save everyone. He elected some to salvation, but not all. And God has that right! He did not owe any of us salvation. It was an act prompted by the love of God.

And here we see how propitiation leads to justification. If there were no satisfactory sacrifice for sinners, then there would be no salvation, no justification of sinners, no one declared righteous before God. And this salvation comes “by His knowledge.” This does not mean that we are saved by what the Lord knows; it means that we are saved by knowing Him! It indicates that the communication of the truth of the Gospel, is what leads to justification and eternal life. This is why Paul said what he did in Rom. 1:16 and 17:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

And early in our Lord’s high priestly prayer in John 17 he said this:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

The Apostle Paul wrote these words describing his own salvation: “I know whom I have believed, and am

persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (2 Tim 1:12).

And it is not just an understanding of Who Jesus Christ is, and what He has done, that results in justification. But it is a personal and experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved through such knowledge of the truth, and we grow as our knowledge of the Lord and the truth increases. So this shows that doctrine is important.

Notice that the Father calls our Lord, “My righteous Servant.” Our Lord was righteous before He went to the Cross, or He could not have been our Savior. But in the time spoken of here in verse 11, He was also righteous, just as righteous, after the Cross. He had been made sin for us. His soul was made an offering for sin. Our sins were charged to Him. He was our Sin Bearer, our Sin Offering. But He *put them away* in the perfect sacrifice which He offered on the Cross. And so even though He was made sin for us, He put them away, and He forever continues to be God’s “righteous Servant.” This is what the writer of Hebrews declared in Heb. 9:24-28:

- 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
- 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
- 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

“For He shall bear their iniquities.” Our Lord has borne the sins of those whom He justifies. This is what we mean by *Particular Redemption*, or *Definite Atonement*. It is not that the death of Christ was not sufficient to save the whole world, but it speaks of the Lord’s purpose in His death, and the Father’s purpose in sending His Son to die on the Cross. Did the Lord die on the Cross thinking that everyone might be saved? If so, how could He have been satisfied with the results of what He had done? And how can we say that the Lord died hoping that many more would be saved than have been saved with the truth of election. Did God and His Son have different objectives in the death of the Messiah? No, absolutely not! God the Father chose those whom He intended to save. Christ died not just to provide salvation for them, but to secure their salvation. And the Holy Spirit is convicting and drawing those chosen sinners to Christ. The purposes of God are being accomplished down to the very people who are being saved.

Now we don’t know who they are, and we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature. And it is true that “whosoever believeth in Him,” Christ, “should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But all who are saved will confess, if they know anything at all about their salvation, that they did not seek the Lord until they realized that the Lord was seeking them. Isaiah knew that truth, and so he said concerning the many who would be justified, that the Servant of the Lord “shall bear their iniquities.” It is wonderful to see these truths tucked away in these OT prophecies which speak of Christ, our Lord.

But let us go on:

5:12 God the Father is speaking here. And He is saying why the Son will be satisfied with the results of His suffering and death on the Cross. The sovereign God is speaking, saying things that would be impossible to do if it were not that He is sovereign! We first have what the Father pledges Himself to do for the Son, and then what the Son will do: “Therefore will I divide Him [or, for Him]..., and He shall divide...” Both words for

"divide" are the same verb in the Hebrew.

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great." The word "portion" does not appear in the Hebrew, but was added by the translators to make the meaning clear. And the idea in this statement is brought out by such verses as Isa. 52:15 and 49:7. (Read.) "The great" ones, many of the kings of the earth, will be found among the redeemed. The Father will bring them, and give them to His Son.

This ought to remind us of what the Apostle Paul wrote at the end of 1 Corinthians 1, that "not many mighty, nor many noble, are called." *But some are! And more will be!* Wise men came from the east to worship the Lord when He was born, but we don't read about any others. However, the Father will give the Son as a part of His inheritance, some of the great ones of the earth. Listen to what we read in Isa. 49:22-23:

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

This is also pictured in Psalm 72. Solomon may have seen a partial fulfillment of this in his day, but its greatest and most extensive fulfillment is being reserved for that day when our Lord will return to the earth to reign. Listen to these words:

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him (Psa. 72:7-11).

So for the kings to come will mean that they will bring their nations with them. And then will be fulfilled what we read about in Rev. 11:15:

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

"And he [the Servant of the Lord] shall divide the spoil with the strong." Many strong ones will be on the side of the Lord, just as David had his mighty men. And the picture is one of great victory. The spoil of the nations of the earth will be divided among them. The Lord came as a lowly Savior the first time, but when He returns to the earth to reign it will be as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Apparently those whom the Lord said were hard to save, will turn to the Lord in great numbers when He returns to reign.. And it will all be because of the great victory, not defeat, at Calvary.

Four reasons are given for the mighty victory of our Lord, the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah.

First, "Because He hath poured out His soul unto death." "Poured out" means that *He emptied Himself*. The death of our Lord was the final step in His humiliation which started when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary. He laid aside the exercise of His divine attributes, and was born, lived, and died as a Man upon the earth. And He not only died as a terrible criminal, but His death was for sinners. No one ever came from greater heights, or stooped to lower depths, than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely this is what the Apostle Paul was speaking about in Phil. 2:5-8. There we read about the Lord emptying

Himself. “Let this mind be in you...”

And we must not overlook the fact that “He hath poured out His soul unto death,” which indicates again that our Lord’s death was voluntary. He laid it down of Himself. No man could take it from Him

The second reason for His glorious victory was, “And He was numbered with the transgressors.”

This not only means that He was crucified between two thieves, but that He was “in the judgment of His countrymen, and in the unjust judgment...by which He was delivered up to death as a wicked apostate and transgressor of the Law” (Delitzsch, II, 339). This was all a part of His humiliation and of His obedience to the Father. He was faithful unto death.

The third reason: “And He bare the sin of many.” He was given a place with transgressors because He was bearing the sin of others, not of His own sins for He had none. The Apostle Peter probably had this clause in mind, as well as Isa. 53:5 when he wrote 1 Pet. 2:24:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

The fourth and final reason: “And He made intercession for the transgressors.” In the preceding statement, we see our Lord as the sin offering; in this statement we see Him as our Great High Priest. One way He made intercession for transgressors was when He prayed from the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

The final perseverance of the saints rests upon our Lord’s work as a Priest, when He offered Himself, and now, according to Heb. 7:25, that “He ever lives to make intercession for us.”

When we add all four of these points together we see very clearly why the Lord Jesus was not vanquished and defeated at the hands of men, but that He has come forth as the mighty Conqueror. The victory is His, and He gives us the victory. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when after expounding the great doctrine of the resurrection, and then speaking of what will take place when He comes again, he said this:

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:57-58).

What is the work of the Lord? It is the salvation of sinners, taking salvation in its largest and grandest meaning—justification, sanctification, and glorification. And He not only has won the victory, but He gives us the victory. And therefore we need to abound in His work. It cannot fail. The victory was won at Calvary, and it can never fail.

As I close I would like to read to you Charles Spurgeon’s comments on these four statements that we have in Isa. 53:12. He was a master with the English language, but his power was not in his eloquence. He was a man whose heart was not only full of the truth of God, but also with faith and love toward the Lord Jesus Christ. And I think you will find his words a blessing, as I have, and an inspiration in this last days in which we are living to persevere in serving our Lord Who one day will return to reign, and Who will be crowned with glory and honor for His victory at Calvary, and since Calvary, at the right hand of the Father. Please take Spurgeon’s words into your own heart.