

Studies in Isaiah - Part 2

by Harry Ironside

The sermon explores the themes of the double for all sins, the gospel message, and the majesty of God, highlighting the importance of waiting upon the Lord and the characteristics of the Lord's ministry.

Duration: 45:51

Scripture: John 7:53

Topics: "Expository"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of preaching the word of God with conviction and power. He uses a satirical example from the book of Isaiah to illustrate the foolishness of turning away from God and worshiping idols. The preacher then delves into the prophecy of Messiah in Isaiah chapter 42, emphasizing that this passage is prophetic of Jesus Christ. He also references passages from chapter 44 and 45 to further support his points about God's plan for his people. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for believers to proclaim the truth of God's word boldly and to trust in God's guidance and protection.

Transcript

Elijah is very clear about that in speaking to Job, you remember, when he says that God will not lay upon man more than his right. He will deal with each man according to his light and knowledge and the actual sins he has committed, but he will not punish anyone more than his sins deserve. Of this expression she has received of the Lord's hand the double for all her sins is a kind of a commercial expression.

When one entered into a certain transaction, as for instance, if a Jew were in financial difficulties and he turned his home or his farm over to a creditor in order to meet his debt, a paper would be made out giving this full information, and one copy of it would be kept by the more the one who had placed the mortgage on the property, and the other would be nailed up on the doorpost so that anyone would understand that this property was now at least temporarily transferred to another. When finally the account was settled and everything was paid, then the notice from the doorpost would be doubled and packed up and doubled, covered over, and that indicated it was all settled. So, when it says here she has received of the Lord's hand the double for all her sins, it is as though it said the account has been fully paid.

There'll be nothing more now to suffer because the Lord will have forgiven her iniquity. That's put before us in the very beginning of this section. That's the goal toward which the people are to look, and then in other chapters we're told how they reach that goal, and so in the first place now we have a prophecy that

relates to the coming of John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

John applies this, you remember, to himself. When certain of the Pharisees came and said, Art thou Messiah? He said, I am not. Art thou that prophet? That is the one spoken of by Moses who said, A prophet to the Lord your God raised up like unto me.

Him shall ye hear in all things. He said, I am not. Well, then they said, If thou art not Messiah, and thou art not that prophet, who art thou, and why baptizest thou? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Thus he applied to himself these words of Isaiah. Well now, as we go on in the chapter we read, the voice said, cry.

God is sending his messenger, and he says to his messenger, now cry. Cry aloud, give out my message. And then the question comes back, what shall I cry? And the answer is, all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, the flowers thereof falleth away, but the word of our God shall stand forever. Well now, what is there comforting about that? Comfort ye my people. And the voice said, cry.

And I said, what will I cry? What will I cry to comfort the people of God? I said, tell them that all flesh is grass. Tell them they're good for nothing. Tell them they're just a lot of poor, helpless sinners.

All flesh is grass, and tell them there's nothing to glory, and all the glory of man is the flower of the grass, and the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. Tell them that. Well, is there anything comforting about that? Well, it's the first thing I need to know.

If I do not learn the lesson of my utter helplessness, I'll never turn to God for salvation. If I think that I can save myself, I'm not going to avail myself of the provision that God has made for my salvation. And so he says, tell them that all flesh is grass, but tell them that the word of the Lord endureth forever.

And the apostle Peter, you remember, quotes this in the first chapter of 1 Peter, and he gives this comment on it. This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. And so, after all, it's the gospel message that comes before us.

The word of the Lord that endures forever is the good tidings of the gospel. I want to my wife to take up from here, and give me a few verses to get a new start. The beginning was mine.

O Zion, that bringeth good tidings, lift thee up into the high mountains. O Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength. Lift it up.

Be not afraid. Pray unto the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hands, and his arms shall be for him.

For all his reward is with him, and his voice is for him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with him.

And, immediately following this word, the word of the Lord endureth forever, with which Peter links the message of the gospel. You have the message...how does that start again, just a hundred meters? O

Zion, that bringeth good tidings. Good tidings? Well, that is the gospel, you see.

But, it's not the gospel exactly as we know it today. It's not the gospel of the grace of God in its fullness that is now proclaimed, but it's the gospel of the kingdom. It's identical with that which will be proclaimed in the coming day, just before the king himself appears.

And, of course, it was also applicable to the days when John the Baptist came, because he came proclaiming the good news of the king who was coming. And, when the Lord Jesus actually came, he took the very place spoken of here by Isaiah. He comes as a shepherd.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd that layeth down his life for the sheep. And so, as the shepherd, he's pictured here in the good news that God brings to Israel, and the shepherd carrying the lambs in his bosom, and gently leading the flock, gently leading those with young. I've no doubt that some of you have used this passage at times when it was very helpful.

I've often found it helpful if used carefully when I was officiating at the funeral service of a little child, particularly a little child whose parents hadn't perhaps yet come to a definite confession of Christ. Of course, one has to be very, very careful at such a time, because hearts are torn and bleeding, and you don't want to add to their pain and sorrow by saying things that are harsh or anything like that. I remember a friend of mine who thought he had to be terribly faithful, and because he was asked to conduct the funeral of a young man who had led a very difficult, wicked life, and died in a drunken spree, he stood over the coffin with a poor, broken-hearted father and mother there.

He said, my friends, we're looking down today on the body of a young man whose soul is now in hell, in torment. And he went on to enlarge and enlarge, so one day the poor mother didn't drop to the ground in a faint, and almost a wonder that the father didn't get up and try to give him a beating for talking like that at the funeral time. That's no time for that kind of thing.

How does anybody know? How does anybody know that the Lord hadn't spoken to that young man even in his very last moment, and that he may not have looked up to God and said, we can't pronounce on people. Only God can do that. It's not for us to do it.

But I've known times when this passage I've found very helpful. I think even now, the time when a dear little one had been taken away, the father and mother had not come out for Christ, and I just told the simple little story at the funeral. I said, you know, it's hard for us to understand why God would take a little one like this, why he would entrust these dear parents with this precious little treasure for just a few years, and then take her away.

But it reminds me of the story of the shepherd who was leading his flock down through the pasture, and they came to a fordable creek, and he wanted to lead them across to the other side. He stepped down into the water and called them, but they came to the edge of the water, and they wouldn't come in. They just remained.

They refused to come any farther, and so then the shepherd turned back, and he picked up one little lamb and another little lamb, and he took them in his arms, and then he stepped down into the water, and the mother sheep came behind bleating for the little ones, and as he walked out into the water with these little lambs in his arms, the mother sheep, both of them, followed him, and then in a moment the whole flock followed. They all went through the water to the other side, and so I just tried to point out to these dear

friends, as kindly and tenderly as I could, that perhaps the Lord has taken this starving little one to draw your hearts out to himself, to give you to know him as the good shepherd. And God used that message that day for the salvation of both the father and the mother, and I think that's a beautiful picture we have here.

He'll carry the lambs in his arms, and he'll gently lead those who have gone, and yet this one who comes to us so tenderly as the shepherd, a real man, a man in absolute holiness, tender, compassionate, loving, is the Omnipotent God, the creator of the ends of the earth. And so, as we go on into the chapter, we hear God himself speaking in power and majesty, putting himself in contrast as we follow the connection with the idols of the heathen, to whom many of the people of Israel had turned. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God is in God, the creator of the ends of the earth? Saint is not, neither is weary.

There is no searching of his understanding. He gives his power to the saint, and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall err as foals, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

The connection, the verses omitted, which you of course will read, show clearly that it's the same blessed one, the shepherd of Israel, who is speaking here as the creator of the heavens, as the one of omnipotent power and omniscient wisdom, and he has a tender interest in everyone, and we find our blessing as we learn to wait upon him. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Natural strength may fail, the youth will faint and grow weary, but you young fellows, with all your vigor and strength, how easily your strength can fail if you just depended on yourself when it came to the hour of trial and temptation.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary.

They shall walk and not faint. An old Puritan commentator suggested on this that you have three kinds of Christians here. Well, of course, in the Old Testament, you don't have Christians in the proper sense at all, but he meant children of God.

He said the young believers are pictured as mounting up on wings as eagles. They're great high flyers. These young folks have just recently been converted, and then those who've gone on a while, they run and don't faint, and then the old Christians, they've got down to where they walk.

They don't do any high flying or running, but they walk quietly with God. Well, there may be a suggestion there, but the point, of course, the prophet is bringing out is this, that our strength is renewed as we learn to wait upon the Lord. And now, as we come into chapter two, we find the Lord presenting Messiah as the God is still put in contrast with man's weakness.

I can't go into the whole chapter, because time won't permit, but my wife will just read us a lecture or two from it. It'll help us get the gist of it. I will help you.

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp-threshing instrument, having teeth, thou shalt thresh the mountains, and heap them small, and shall make the hills a sack. See, all these are promises made to Israel when they're restored to him, but they follow the account of the majesty of God, and it's man in his weakness depending on the infinitely strong one. This all, this comes in as a kind of a preface before Jehovah points

out the folly of turning to senseless idols who are absolutely unable to help.

You notice the expression here, Abraham, my friend. That's the passage referred to in the New Testament, where we read that Abraham is called the friend of God. What a wonderful thing for God to say of any man, my friend.

And the Lord Jesus, you remember, said to his disciples, henceforth I've not called you servants, I've called you friends. For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. The servant is to do what he's told.

It's not for him to ask, why do I do this? But just because he's told to do it. But to the friend one unburdens his heart, and the Lord speaks of Abraham, my friend. You remember, God took him into his confidence in regard to sovereign's judgments, and so on.

And so, all the way through, God delights to open up his mind to his friends, and the prophetic scriptures are just that. They're opening up of God's truth that his friends may enter into and understand that which he is about to do. This expression concerning Israel, that God is going to make them as sharp, threshing instruments with teeth, points on to the great harvest of the last days when Israel, a remnant of Israel, restored to the Lord, will be used of him to bring many down before him in repentance, and lead them to put faith in the message that they proclaim.

And you and I, surely, as servants of Christ, we need to be sharp, threshing instruments with teeth. I think, you know, a lot of preaching hasn't much teeth to it. It wouldn't hurt anybody.

Now, don't misunderstand. I said a moment ago we need to be careful about people's feelings, but on the other hand, what I'm trying to say now is that we should be faithful in pointing out the wickedness of mankind and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that men may realize where they stand before God. So, we need to have teeth in our preaching.

A lot of preaching is just absolutely powerless and colorless, and saved or unsaved can sit and listen to it and enjoy it. I think I've mentioned before the young man who came to his pastor who was resigning to accept another church. He had been called to a sphere of greater usefulness, that is a church with a bigger salary, and so he left the one where he was serving him.

When he was saying goodbye to his flock, one young man came up to him and he said, well pastor, I'm awfully sorry that you're leaving us. When you came here three years ago, I was a young man who didn't care for God, man, or the devil, but now since I've listened to your beautiful sermons, I've learned to love them all. Now, that's the kind of thing you get in many places.

That's preaching without teeth, but God would have his servants as sharp, threshing instruments with teeth. Well, now we come into chapter 42, and we have Messiah. Now God carries his people on for the time.

We've already spoken of the forerunner, the voice crying in the wilderness. Now we have Messiah himself presented. He's going to take this up fuller in the next section, but he comes here in order that Israel may have the program of God before them and realize what folly it is to turn away from the living and true God to their senseless idols.

This passage is definitely referred to in the New Testament as prophetic of our Lord. Once, for behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him.

He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised wreath shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.

He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. You remember how this is definitely referred to in the New Testament.

He shall not break the bruised wreath, nor quench the smoking flax. Wherever there's the least evidence of the heart's desire to turn to God, he quickens it, and encourages it, and leads people on into full assurance of faith at last. The characteristics of the Lord's ministry here are worth our consideration.

You know, I think that we're apt sometimes to go to extremes. Well, anybody about their souls. We don't do any personal work.

We don't pay any attention, no matter what people may say or do, except to preach from the platform. Or else, on the other hand, we're inclined to be very obtrusive, and very self-assertive, and call people down ruthlessly, and do many things that are hardly in keeping with that Christian culture which we ought to manifest. But this passage did a lot for me when I was a young man.

You see, I began my ministry as a Salvation Army officer, and 60 years ago the Salvation Army was a mighty power for good in this country. It just dwindled down, and down, and down. We used to march the streets of San Francisco in processions of over a thousand with two or three big brass bands, and we were winning hundreds of souls to Christ.

But, little by little, the organization got away from all that. Now, it's almost just a great charitable organization. But we were inclined, perhaps, to go to two great extremes in our intense earnestness.

Do things that possibly were not wise, and maybe instead of impressing people for God, impressed them with our own, well, what shall I say, made us think, made them think we were a lot of crazy folk, or something like that. I'll just mention myself, you know. I was so under the power of legality that I felt guilty if I ever rode in a street car, and I didn't immediately get up and begin to give my testimony.

I'd just get to my feet as soon as left the corner and say, friends, I want to give my testimony for Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you how God saved me, and so on. I'd have the conductor coming after me, here, sit down. We didn't, we didn't ask you to come in here to conduct a church service, and all sorts of things.

Then I sometimes, I'm afraid, I was rather rude to him. I'd say, well, I'd sit down, and I'll sit down if you say so, but you'll have to answer the judgment bar of God for trying to keep these people from hearing the gospel. I'd just do the same thing in a railroad train if I traveled in a railroad train.

As soon as he got away from the station, I'd get up and turn around, face the people, and begin to give them a test, and I thought I had to do it. I thought if I didn't do it that I'd be responsible for the loss of their souls, and I used to do a lot of things like that that were rude, and I didn't realize it. I remember the last time I ever got up in a railroad train like that to give my testimony.

I just got well started when a big fat Roman Catholic priest, and I don't like fat men, a big fat Roman Catholic priest jumped to his feet, and he says, What's this? What's this? Have I got to be insulted? Have I paid my ticket for a seat here in a railroad train? Have I got to sit in a Protestant service? Where's the conductor? Where's the conductor? And the conductor said, young man, you can't do this. You have no

right to interfere with other people's religion when you're riding in a railroad train, and so I had to sit down. I felt properly squelched.

Well, you know, it bothers me. The devil just, he either tries to keep you quiet, or else he tries to just run you ragged with the legality, making you think you've got to do things all the time that are unreasonable, and you know the thing that delivered me at last, and that showed me that there was a golden mean between indifference and rudeness, was this very passage. What does it say of the Lord Jesus? He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets.

He went through his service here for God in such a restful, quiet way. If people came to him and wanted to know how to get eternal life, or how to get saved, he was always ready to meet them, and he sought out the lost as the woman at the well, and so on, but you never find him doing anything that's rude, or that's boisterous, or that's uncouth. He was truly God's gentle man.

I was rather shocked when I first heard that expression applied to him. I picked up an old history of the world, a little volume in black letter in the city of London some years ago, that was published way back in 1600 and something, and it was most interesting to read it, and when it came down to the days of the Roman Empire, and Augustus Caesar, and so on, it said, in his days there was born in Bethlehem of Judea that goodly gentleman, Jesus Christ. I was so surprised to see the Lord referred to in that way.

There was born that goodly gentleman, Jesus Christ, and then as I meditated on it, I thought, well, why shouldn't that epithet be applied to him? What is a gentleman? A gentle man, a gracious man, and Jesus was all of that, always gentle, gracious, and then even when rebuking sins sternly, still he never did anything that was boisterous, or that made him seem uncouth. You know, people have different ideas of gentlemen, of course. In our country, we think of any gracious man as a gentle man, gentleman, but over in Great Britain, they have funny ideas.

When the Moody Church was still in debt, I was over there, and the lady said to me when I was at the dinner party one day, she said, Doctor, how much are you still owing on the church? I said, \$175,000. She said, well, how much was owing when you came in? I said, \$375,000, and you've got \$2,000 paid off. Yes, well, now she said, I wish you could see Mr. So-and-so.

I think he'd give you a good donation for that. Otherwise, I wouldn't think of expecting a man over here in England to pay for a church in America. We get plenty of money there if I can only think it out of him.

Well, but she said, I think he'd be glad to do it. He has a lot of money, and I noticed the other day he gave £50,000 to the China Inland Mission. Well, I said, what does he do? She said, what do you mean, what does he do? Well, how does he earn his money? What does he work at? Work? Oh, she said, he doesn't work.

He's a jackhammer. Oh, I said, is that what you call them here? I said, we have a lot of people in America who don't work. We call them hobos.

Well, there's a difference of opinion, you know, as to what is meant by working. Well, here, I'm getting off the track. Come on.

Now, in 43, we have the Lord's gracious care of Israel continued. See how wonderfully he enters into their sorrows. They'll think back to this.

And thou dost sayest the Lord hath created thee, O Jacob, and he that forms thee, O Israel. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.

Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior. And so, as we go on into this chapter, we find the Lord expressing his gracious care of his people.

And then, it's right here that he brings Israel before us as his witnesses, is it? Yes. Now, just before my wife reads that, let me say this word. We have a group of people today who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses.

Where did they get that idea of calling themselves Jehovah's Witnesses? Well, right from this chapter. Right from this chapter, when Jehovah said to Israel, Ye are my witnesses. Just get the connection here.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he. That for me there was no God formed, neither shall that there be after me. For thirteen days before the day was, I am he.

You see, the Lord turns to Israel, and he says, You are my witnesses. And this is true of Israel, whether they're obedient to him or disobedient, whether they're in the land or out of the land, whether they're keeping the law or breaking the law. Because God has given his testimony through Moses and other prophets, showing just how he was going to deal with this people of Israel down through the centuries.

The blessings that would be theirs if they walked in obedience, the curses and judgments that would come upon them if they were disobedient. History shows the truth of what God has declared, and therefore Israel is God's witness to the truth of his word. You've often heard the familiar story of the instance where Frederick the Great, who had been listening to Voltaire and was all tangled up with agnostic ideas, turned to one of his court chaplains and said, Chaplain, if your Bible is true, it ought to be capable of very clear and succinct witness proof.

Generally, when I ask for proof that the Bible is true, I'm handed some great big dry scholarly volume which I have neither the time nor the patience to read. If your Bible is true, give me the proof of it in one word. And the chaplain answered, Sire, Israel.

And Frederick acknowledged that that, indeed, was the proof that the Bible was true. Israel, ye are my witnesses. And now, from this time on, you'll find Jehovah challenging the priests of the heathen, the priests of the idolaters.

He says, give us some evidence, give us some evidence that any spirit of prophecy is working in you. Tell us things to come, or go back and tell us things that have been. Explain the past, explain the origin of the world.

They couldn't do it, but God has done all these things. The spirit of prophecy is the proof that the Bible is actually the word of the living God. So, he says, ye are my witnesses, sayest the Lord.

Now, in the last part, chapter 44, did you want something more in there? I'm depending a good deal on my wife's judgment, because we talk this whole before we come in, and I forget things. The promise of the

spirit. Oh yes.

Where at last Messiah, just a minute, when Messiah's day comes, then the spirit is going to be poured out upon Israel from an eye. That has not taken place yet. As we saw yesterday, that's not to be confounded what took place in Pentecost, but the prophecy of Jerald links with what we have here.

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon my fine offspring. And in the eighth verse repeated, ye are even my witnesses.

Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any. I guess our time. Then it's in the last verse of this chapter that we have the prophecy of King Cyrus.

And this is this, of course, as I've said in the beginning, that has raised the question in the minds of some as to whether this could have been written way back in the days of Hezekiah or some of the other kings. But, when we take the Holy Spirit into consideration, we don't have any difficulty about that. Now, in chapter 44, we have God continuing this theme in a very precious and wonderful way in the early part of the chapter.

And then, in the beginning about the third down of the chapter, you have Jehovah's direct word in regard to idolatry. I haven't time to read the passage, but you read it carefully. It's the most interesting portion, and it's really quite amusing and satirical, as Isaiah depicts a man going out into the forest, for instance, and looking out and finding a noble tree.

And, he cuts it down, and he lops off all the branches, and then he begins to fashion it with his tools. And, by and by, he has the figure of a man. And, the chicks as they fly, he gathers up, and the extra parts that are not wanted to make the image, and he uses them as fuel.

And, he cooks his food, and he says, Mar, this is fine. I've warmed myself with the fire, and I've got a God to worship all of the same tree. And, Isaiah just hires on the satire and the ridicule in a most remarkable way.

It shows the folly of idolatry. This comes in also, if you'll remember, in the book of the prophet Jeremiah. He uses very similar language in dealing with the idolatry of the people.

Now, this has been cursory. I know maybe I've wasted a little bit of time telling you a few stories, but, you know, I have to wake you up once in a while to keep you from going to sleep. And, this afternoon, we'll go into the next section.

I hope we'll be able to cover it. Of one section, embracing chapters 40 through 48, in which we have Jehovah's controversies with idols. Throughout this section, he is emphasizing his own power and majesty.

It's strange the thoughts that run through people's minds. I remember reading a lecture of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll some years ago, and he dwelt on this. He said, what a ghost, sir, this god of the bible is.

How often he talks about himself, and what he has done and can do. Well, one should understand an ungodly man looking at it that way, but who, in all the universe, has a right about, say, the god who created it? And why does he set forth his own glory, and his own majesty, and his own power? Why does

he emphasize his own wisdom, and his own strength and ability, in order that men may realize the importance of living in touch with him, and the folly of turning to anyone else? What folly for the people of Israel! After all, God had dumb folly to turn aside to dumb idols. Yet, how senseless people are! I would read of different occasions in the Kings and Chronicles, even when the people of Israel or Judah went out against some of their foes, and they overcame them.

Then they brought back the gods of the nations that they had overcome, and they proved powerless to defend their own. And yet, the people of Israel were so foolish that they took them over. Today, men do not worship the idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, but every man who turns away from God sets up some kind of an idol in his heart.

He either worships himself, or he worships folly, pleasure, faith, something of that kind. I remember how aptly Dr. Philpott spoke when he was being introduced on one occasion. The speaker said to him, I'm happy now to present to you Dr. Peter W. Philpott, a self-made man.

And, Dr. Philpott said, I'm really sorry that our brother has introduced me in the way he has, so I appreciate his kind thoughts. But, he said, you know, I've noticed that these self-made men all seem to worship their own creator. And, that is very apt, I thought.

If men do not know the one living and true God, then the first thing you know is set up the great God Philp, and worship him. Well, we've already considered, then, the first part of this section in which God is telling Israel of what he has in store for them, of the redeemer that's yet to come, of the forerunner who will announce his coming, of the comfort that he has for those who believe his word, who put their trust in him. And then, just as we can, and of the, and how he has foreseen the dangers and the sorrows that Israel must pass through, that deep waters through which they'll have to go.

But, he has promised that where there's real faith and their party of the wisdom, and all their sorrows, and all their troubles, and then in the very closing words of the 44th chapter, there's an abrupt change, and he speaks of one who is yet to come to be the deliverer of Israel from the power of the Chaldeans, calls him by name, though he's not known him, that is Cyrus King of Persia. Now, remember that Isaiah wrote about, well, I suppose these words were written somewhere around the end of the eighth century before Christ, about 710-720, somewhere in there, and the Babylonian captivity was not until about 600, so that over a century was to elapse before Cyrus. Oh, more than that, the Babylonian captivity was to go on for 70 years, so that nearly two centuries would elapse before Cyrus himself would appear, and yet God foretold to the people of his day that this man would arise, so that when he did come they would know it was the hour of Jehovah's deliverer.

I think I mentioned here, or was it in some other place where I was preaching lately? I don't recall, but I mentioned that sometimes the divisions into chapters and verses come in the wrong places. We all know that it wasn't a question of inspiration dividing the bible into chapters and verses, it's simply a matter of accommodation on the part of human editors who thought it would help us to separate the subjects and to find certain passages, and I suppose it has been very, very helpful to have our bible divided in this way into chapters and verses. But, on the other hand, sometimes it's misleading.

Sometimes it keeps us from getting the full content of a passage if the passage is broken up in the middle, and it seems as though at times the editors have used poor judgment in making a break where they have. For instance, take the break between John 7 and 8. The last words of John 7 are, and every man went to his own house. The opening words of John 8 are, Jesus went to the mount of Olives.

They failed to translate one little word that should have been read in this part, and were broken a sentence right in two. Every man went to his own house, but Jesus went to the mount of Olives. He had no house to go to.

He was the homeless stranger in the world of old Antony, and when others went off to their comfortable homes that night, he went out to the mountainside, I suppose to the garden of Gethsemane, and spent the night there lying upon the bare ground of the New English Cross. And, so, these provisions don't always follow right. Now, it's very evident here that the last verse of chapter 44 is introducing what you have in chapter 45, and so I'm going to ask my wife to read it together.

The last of chapter 44 and the beginning of 45. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in front of the guard of thine, and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and give thee riches of precious places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, is called thee by thy name, and the God of Israel.

For this is my service-place, and Israel mine elect, and it is called thee by thy name, and its full name is thee, for thou hast not known me." Now, this is the passage pre-eminently that the critics take as proof that the Isaiah who wrote the first part of the book could not have written these words. But, as we said this morning, that seems to be taking a whole section of inspiration. If we believe, as every Christian should, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but that holy men of God say that they were moved by the Holy Ghost, there's no more difficulty in understanding that God could foretell the rise of King Cyrus and what he would do for his people than there was in that he could foretell the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world, and the redemption that he would accomplish.

His first coming, and his second coming, and the effects and results of his rejection, and then the results of his final acceptance by the people of Israel. All this was foretold ahead of time, and so in the same way God, through Isaiah, foretold the rising up of Cyrus. It's good for us to remember just who this Cyrus was.

He was the nephew of Cyaxares, who at this time was king of Media. Media and Persia were two kingdoms that were, as a rule, very closely related. They sprang from the same thought, and it was through these kingdoms, united together under the leadership of Cyrus and Cyaxares, that eventually Chaldea was conquered, and Babylon became one of the chief cities of the Persian empire until its eventual complete destruction.

It's interesting to turn aside to secular history to get fuller information about some of these things. Eroticism has a lot to tell us about it, and there are other ancient records that have come down to it to tell us how Cyrus and Cyaxares entered into a combine, as we would say, and marched against Babylon, and eventually took Babylon by turning aside the waters of the Euphrates into another channel, and so came in under the Tule's gates, under the gates of the river itself. That's what's indicated here.

So, God foresaw this. He looks ahead and he tells us, he says, he tells Cyrus himself, I've called you to this. You see, one thing we need to remember, one reason why Cyrus and the Persians befriended the people of Israel was this, that the Persians, like the Israelites, were monotheists.

They did not believe in idolatry. They did not worship idols. They abhorred idols.

They worshipped God under the symbol of the sun, and they also believed in a great power they called Orimen. Orimus was the name for God. Orimen was the name for the power of darkness, and some people think of them as dualists.

So, they believed in two great gods, the god of light and the god of darkness. But, it seems more likely that what they really believed was in one true and living god, but with a great adversary, just as we believe in faith of an adversary seeking to impede in every possible way the carrying out of God's counting. So, then, naturally, a people believing in one god who was symbolized by the sun, and didn't actually worship the sun as some have thought, but who was symbolized by the sun, would look with favor upon Israel when they found that they did not worship idols.

It was because of idolatry they were sent down to Babylon, but Babylon cured them of idolatry. The 70 years that they dwelt in Babylon gave them such a sickness of idolatry that, no matter what other sin the Jewish people had fallen into sin, they'd never, as a people, been characterized by idolatry. Undoubtedly, here and there, there have been Jews who have been idolatrous because of ignorance, and because of being brought up among an idolatrous people.

But, the nation ourself learned to abhor idolatry from what they saw in Babylon.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7659.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/harry-ironside/studies-in-isaiah-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net