

Studies in Isaiah - Part 9

by Harry Ironside

The second part of the Book of Isaiah is a call to comfort the people of God, but also to bring them to a realization of their true condition and the need for salvation.

Duration: 46:08

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-2, Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 48:17

Topics: "Expository"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a passage from the book of Isaiah where a man goes into the forest and fashions a figure out of a tree. The preacher uses this story to illustrate the power and creativity of God. He then moves on to discuss the message of comfort that God gives to his people, emphasizing that all flesh is like grass and the glory of man is temporary. The preacher encourages his listeners to recognize their own sinfulness and to find comfort in the enduring word of God.

Transcript

The Book of Isaiah again, and today we begin the, to study the second part of this book, actually in a sense the third part, because we've already considered the first part of the Book of Isaiah divided into two, one the prophetic and the other historical. And now we take up the last chapters beginning with chapter 40 and going on of course eventually to chapter 66. I do feel sorry that I can't see clearly enough to read in public.

It's a strange thing I can sit down in my room and with the aid of a glass read, but the minute I stand up here somewhere and other everything blurs. I don't know why. And so I still have to depend on my wife to do the reading.

You know of course that the critics long ago decided that the second part, this part beginning with chapter 40, was not written by Isaiah the prophet, but was written by one whom they call the great unknown. They insist that there are some differences in the literary style, though I don't think that very much could be said in that score. I'm sure that several of the chapters in the first part rise to the same high poetic heights that the chapters of this part do.

But they also object, they also claim that it could not be the work of a man who lived in the days of Uzziah, Jopham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah because of the fact that he speaks definitely of Cyrus, King Cyrus, through whom the remnant of Israel were restored to Jerusalem, calls him even by name. And these critics, not

believing in the spirit of prophecy, insist that therefore the man who wrote this part of the book must have lived after the days of Cyrus and after the return to the land. Well they've never been able to prove their contention, and our Lord himself definitely refers to this portion of the book and speaks of it as the work of Isaiah the prophet.

And the Holy Spirit says that when he entered into the synagogue of Nazareth it was delivered unto him the book of Isaiah to read, and it quotes from this part of the book. Of course, on the other hand, one has to recognize the fact that even some very able Christian teachers have accepted the idea that it may be that this last part of the book was written by someone whose name has now been lost. I was rather surprised years ago when I used to denominate everybody a heretic who believed that to find that Bishop Handley Mowell believed it and that Sir Robert Anderson of all persons believed that Isaiah had been written by two different people.

I don't know how they came to that conclusion in the light of our Lord's words as I mentioned in the Gospels, but they did and of course it would be heresy to call Sir Robert Anderson a heretic. And Bishop Mowell was his great tutor and of course we wouldn't think of Bishop Mowell as a heretic. There are some things on which good men differ and we need to remember that.

The only men who are absolutely sure of everything as a rule are first-year Bible Institute men. They know everything. But from that on, of course, people have to realize that there are some things that may still be debatable and therefore that we must be rather slow in forming judgments of people who may differ with it.

But personally I have no question that the second part of this book was written by the same Isaiah as the one who wrote the first part. I remember years ago hearing Dr. Lyman Abbott, who was one of the most pronounced of the higher critics in the old days before we used the term modernist, I heard him lecturing to a group of theological students in Berkeley, California. And while he took a very definite stand in favor of higher criticism, he was warning these young men about going into the pulpit and talking about the assured results of higher criticism.

I remember his saying about these words, he said, I suppose young gentlemen that I am as familiar with the higher criticism as any man in America. And I can say to you that the only thing that we are absolutely assured of is that the Pentateuch, for instance, was written by Moses or by some other man named Moses. And so we may be very sure that the entire book of Isaiah was written by Isaiah or by some other man named Isaiah.

And therefore we don't need to raise any question in that regard. Anyone who has questions I think will find the matter pretty fully gone into in William Kelly's book on Isaiah and doubtless in many others that perhaps I'm not familiar with. Now this great section beginning with chapter 40 divides into three parts.

In chapters 40 to 48, we have Jehovah's controversy with Israel because of idolatry. And that section ends with the words, there is no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked. All throughout that section, through those nine chapters, Jehovah is put in contrast with the idols to which many of the people had turned.

And the conclusion is there's no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked. Then beginning with chapter 29 and going on through chapter, now it's just slipped my mind, 58 or 57? 57, thank you. I've got a good pair of eyes to help me out.

The Lord was awful good to a blind old man. Going from chapter 49 to 57, we have Jehovah's controversy with Israel concerning their attitude toward the Messiah. That's looking away on into the future and God is speaking to them in regard to the coming of Messiah and their rejection of him.

And that ends with the words, there is no peace, saith my God to the wicked. So you see, there's no peace for the one who puts anything else in the place of the one true and living God. And there's no peace for the one who rejects the Savior that God has provided.

Now if I can, this morning and this afternoon, I would like to cover chapters 40 through 48. And perhaps this morning, chapters 40 through 44. The section commences with the words, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem. Tell her that her warfare is accomplished. She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

God is going to comfort people, but in comforting people, you find out as you go on, that he has to bring before them very definitely their true condition in his sight. And then he shows them the remedy that he has for that condition. So there's quite a little in the first part of this chapter that may not sound very comforting.

And yet, God has to begin that way. He wounds that he may heal. He kills that he may make alive.

So today, if God is going to give people the comfort of the knowledge of forgiveness of sins and of the salvation of the soul, he begins by stressing and bringing before people their utterly lost condition, their helplessness, their sinfulness, thus leading them to take their true place before God in repentance, as confessing and acknowledging their iniquities. He looks forward here to the time, however, when Israel's iniquities will all be put away. He says, Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and tell her that her warfare, her long conflict, is accomplished, and God, the Lord, hath returned unto her double for all her sins.

Now that doesn't mean that in the end, Israel will have been punished twice as much as her sins deserve. The Lord hath rewarded double for all her sins. God will never punish anyone twice as much as their sins deserve.

Elihu is very clear about that in speaking to Job, you remember. But he says that God will not lay upon man more than is right. He will deal with each man according to his length and knowledge of the actual sins he has committed.

But he'll not punish anyone more than his sins deserve. But this expression, She hath 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 debts, a paper would be made out giving this full information, and one copy of it would be kept by 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 on the doorpost would be doubled and packed up, doubled, covered over, and that indicated that it was all settled. So when it says here, She hath received of the Lord's hand the double for all her sins, it is as though it says the account has been fully paid. There'll be nothing more now, 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 applied this, you remember, to himself. When certain of the Pharisees came and said, Art thou Messiah? He said, I'm not. Art thou that prophet? That is the one spoken of by Moses, who said, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise 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 flower 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? And 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 it says, Tell them that all flesh is grass.

But tell them that the word of the Lord endureth forever. And the apostle Peter, you'll 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 a gospel message that comes before us. The word of the Lord that endureth forever is the good tidings of the gospel. I want to, my wife, take up from here and give me a few verses to get you started.

Beginning with 9, O land that brings good tidings, O Jerusalem that lift up thy voice with strength, Lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall root for him. Behold, his reward is with him, and his works before 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. Now you see, 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, Beth Zion? Just go on from there. 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 as it's 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 is 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 dislet 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, the wonder the poor mother didn't drop to the ground in a faint, and almost the wonder that the father didn't get up and try to give him a beating for talking like that at a 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 moments, and that he may not have looked up to God and then said, we can't pronounce on people. Only God can do that. 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 has been taken away, the father and mother had not come out for Christ, and I just told a 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.

And as 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, and 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 darling 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 bosom, and he'll gently lead those with young.

And yet this one who comes to us so tenderly as the good 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. Hath thou not known, hath 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 power to the saints, and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utter his power.

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 youths 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 have gone on a while, why they they run, 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 fly and they're 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, isn't it? Oh and 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 a selection or two from it. It'll help us to get the drift on it. 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, I've henceforth 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? For 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 how he took him into his confidence in regard to Sodom's judgment 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. It's just, 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.

Just 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, and 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.

That's the kind of thing you'd 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 to the time he's 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.

One to four. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighted. 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 hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his love. 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, we are apt to go to extremes on one side or the other. Either we don't like to talk to 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 sixty years ago the Salvation Army was a mighty power for good in this country.

It's 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, impress them with our own, well, what shall I say, made them think we were a lot of crazy folk or 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 streetcar and I didn't immediately get up and begin to give my testimony. I'd just get to my feet as soon as we 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 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 do the same thing in a railroad train if I traveled in a railroad train. As soon as we got away from the station, I'd get up and turn around, face the people, and begin to give my testimony. I felt I had to do it.

I felt if I didn't do it that I'd be responsible for the loss of their souls. 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. You know, it bothered me.

The devil just, he either tries to keep you quiet or else he tries to just run you like it with 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 be saved, he was always ready to meet them. And he sought out the lost, 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 Mudea 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 that, 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, tender.

And even when rebuking sin 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 a lady said to me when I was to 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 yet. Well, now she said, I wish you could see Mr. So-and-so. I think he'd give you a good donation for that.

Oh, I said, I wouldn't expect a man over here in England to pay for a church in America. We've got plenty of money there, but I can only dig it out of him. And 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 pounds 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 gentleman. 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. Now in 43, we have the Lord's gracious care of Israel continued.

See how wonderfully he enters into their sorrows. 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.

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 where Jehovah said to Israel, ye are my witnesses.

Just get the connection here. Ye are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me there was no God formed, neither shall that there be after me.

And thirteen, yea, 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 had 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 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, sayeth 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 over before we come in and I forget things. The promise of the spirit in chapter 44. When 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 Joel 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 thy 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. Then it's in the last verse of this chapter that we have the prophecy of King Cyrus. This is this, of course, as I've said in the beginning, it 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 her down, and he lops off all the branches.

Then he begins to fashion it with his tools, and by and by he has the figure of a man. And the chips as they fly, he gathers up 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, My, this is my man.

I've warmed myself with the fire, and I've got a God to worship all over the same tree. And Isaiah just piles 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. Well, now, this has been cursory, I know.

And 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.

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