

Chapter Seventeen God Redeems: Isaiah

The prophecy of Isaiah begins the last great division of the Old Testament--the 16 books of the prophets. We have already seen in the Old Testament that the first five books set out for us the *pattern of God's working in our lives*. These were followed by the historical books, Joshua through Esther. The major purpose of these is to detail *the perils which confront those seeking to walk with God* in the midst of a degenerate world. There we learned the power of the opposing forces of the spiritual life in their sly subtlety and cruel destructiveness, manifesting themselves in historical events. Then came the poetical books--Job through Song of Solomon--which express the *protests and rejoicings of the heart* exposed to the perils of the world. These books concentrate on the character of man and help us to understand ourselves in our threefold makeup of spirit, soul and body.

But now we come to the prophets. The pattern of life is given in the Pentateuch, the perils are set forth in the historical books, and the protests of the spirit and soul are expressed in the poetical books. But in the prophets we discover *the mighty promises* of God. What is a promise? When two young people stand at a wedding altar while someone sings "O Promise Me," what are they doing? They are committing themselves to give of themselves to each other. A promise basically is a commitment to share yourself. In a promise you commit something of your time, your energy, your resources to another person. That is what a promise is; it is a sharing of self.

So the great promises of the Bible are God's commitments to share Himself with us. When we understand those promises we will understand something more of the nature and character of our God. That is why an understanding of the prophets is of such momentous importance in reading the Bible, for it is here we learn what God says He will do. It is impossible to exercise true faith if we do not have a promise upon which to rest our faith. People often prate on about faith and belief and yet never have any true basis or ground because they have no promise. If God has *said* He will do something, then we can exercise faith and expect Him to do it. If He has not said so, faith has no ground and is of no value.

Each of the prophetic books takes as its theme a great promise of God and highlights it in various ways, some like Isaiah in magnificent language, and others like Ezekiel in awesome imagery. Others employ powerful invectives or speak from weeping, grief-stricken hearts. But whatever the prophetic style, there gradually emerges through the prophetic books a vision of the character of God.

The prophets were all men who walked closely with God, and that is what enabled them to see into the heart of things, both present and future. As the priests of Israel sought to present men to God, so the prophets gave themselves to the ministry of presenting God to men. In our English versions of the Old Testament, the first of the prophets is Isaiah. In many ways that order is representative of the man and his ministry, for Isaiah was the greatest of the prophets and a superb master of language.

This prophecy is the fullest revelation of Christ to be found in the Old Testament--so much so that it is frequently called "the gospel according to Isaiah." The book is often called a miniature Bible, for its structure parallels that of the whole Bible itself. As the Bible has 66 books, so Isaiah has 66 chapters. The Bible divides into two major divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and Isaiah likewise divides into two major divisions. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and there are 39 chapters in the first section of Isaiah. There are 27 books in the New Testament and there are 27 chapters in the last half of Isaiah. Just as the New Testament begins with the history of John the Baptist the forerunner of Christ, so the second half of Isaiah at chapter 40 begins with the announcement of the coming of the forerunner. The New Testament ends

with the book of Revelation with its vision of the new heaven and the new earth, while the book of Isaiah closes with a remarkable chapter that speaks also of the new heavens and the new earth God is now creating.

We know very little about Isaiah himself. He lived during the reigns of four kings of Judah--Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. His ministry began some 740 years before Christ at a time when the 10 tribes that formed the northern kingdom of Israel were under attack from the Assyrian general, Sennacherib. At the close of Isaiah's ministry, Judah, the southern kingdom, was plunging into a terrible idolatry which would end with Nebuchadnezzar's attack and eventual captivity in Babylon. Thus the ministry of Isaiah spans the time between the captivity of the northern kingdom and the captivity of the southern kingdom--about 50 years duration. Ministering along with Isaiah during this same period of time were the prophets Amos, Hosea and Micah.

Tradition tells us that Isaiah was martyred in the reign of Manasseh, one of the most wicked of the kings recorded in the Old Testament. The story is that he was fleeing from the soldiers of the king and hid in a hollow tree, hoping to escape. But the soldiers, knowing that he was in the tree, sawed the tree down and thus the prophet was sawn in half. In the great chapter of the heroes of faith, Hebrews 11, verse 37, there is reference to some who perished by being sawn in two, and many scholars feel this refers to the prophet Isaiah.

The theme of the book is reflected in the meaning of the prophet's name: *Isaiah* --the salvation of God. It is the great and fundamental promise of all the Bible that God is able to redeem. It is declared most clearly in the opening chapter, verse 18: "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

It is declared plainly again in chapter 55, verse 1: "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Though these verses may be taken as a key to the book of Isaiah, nevertheless they must not lead us into thinking this book and other books of the Bible are like locked houses, barred and shuttered which cannot be entered unless a key is employed. Some people seem to feel that the only duly licensed real estate agents are Bible teachers and preachers who alone have keys to the Scriptures.

In 2 Peter, in the New Testament, Peter says: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (1:20, 21, *NASB*).

In this first letter, Peter had declared that "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry" (1:10, *NASB*). Thus we learn that prophets like Isaiah were very much aware that an invisible power within them was speaking through them and that what they spoke and wrote was greater than their own ideas. Peter goes on to say they actually searched through their own writings to discover hidden truths therein, and in this sense they ministered to themselves by their own prophecies.

The Search for Salvation

If any key is needed to the book of Isaiah, this is it: Isaiah was a man who was searching for something, and the apostle Peter tells us plainly that he was searching for the salvation which was to come from God.

But what set this man searching? Why does he pore over his writings, puzzling about what he had said? One need only open the book and read the first few chapters to find the answer. Isaiah lived in a time of national stress when man's fundamental nature of rebellion and evil was exposing itself for what it was. The nation had deliberately forsaken the ways of God and their stupid obstinacy is beyond the prophet's understanding. He opens the first chapter (v. 3) by saying: "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand."

In various beautiful figures the prophet goes on to describe the condition of the nation in their self-deceptive reliance upon external religious activities while their hearts were given over to idolatry and sinful practices. There are gleams of promise in the midst of words of condemnation, such as the famous passage in chapter 2 (which also appears in the prophecy of Micah): "In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be

established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths" (2:2, 3 NASB).

But before that beautiful promise is fulfilled, the terrible Day of the Lord must come, and Isaiah describes this both in its immediate fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and in its ultimate fulfillment in the last days of the age.

Chapter 5 contains the prophet's description of the nation as the vineyard of the Lord. It is to this passage that Jesus refers in the Upper Room Discourse in John 15 when He says: "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser" (v. 1). Isaiah is puzzled how these two themes of condemnation and reconciliation can both be fulfilled, and he continues his search for an answer.

Then God gives Isaiah a vision and he sees the holy and pure God in an amazing revelation described in chapter 6: "In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (6:1-3, NASB).

In the year that King Uzziah died, when the throne was vacant, the prophet saw the throne that was never vacant. He saw the God of both wrath and power, the God with power to shake the earth to its foundation--an immense God, infinite and mighty, speaking in thunder and moving in strength. The prophet's reaction is to see his own sinfulness and cry out: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (6:5).

But one of the angelic seraphim flies to him with a burning coal and touches his mouth and says: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven" (v. 7). Thus in his own personal experience the prophet learns the secret of God's salvation: it is God Himself who must accomplish it, and man can have no part of it. Isaiah is then commissioned to go to the nation and cry to them, but is warned that they will not listen to his plea. When he asks how long this should go on the answer is: "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people, and the land is utterly desolate (6:11, NASB).

God's Plan of Salvation

Beginning with chapter 7 through chapter 12 the first step in God's compassionate plan of salvation is revealed. When Ahaz, king of Judah, is troubled about threats to his kingdom from Syria and Samaria on the north, the prophet is sent to him with a message that God Himself will deliver the nation, and He will give them a sign: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken" (7:14-16, NASB).

This, like many other prophecies in the Old Testament, finds a dual fulfillment. There is an immediate fulfillment described in chapter 8: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, 'Call his name Maher-shalal-hashbaz for before the child knows how to cry "My father" or "My mother," the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria"' (8:3,4).

Here it is clear that God uses even the names of Isaiah's two sons to convey his prophetic intent. An older son named *Sheari-jasheb* (a remnant shall return) had already signaled the promise that Judah would not be totally destroyed, but now *Maher-shalal-hashbaz* (swift the booty; speedy the prey) was to be a sign to King Ahaz that the two kings he feared would in themselves become booty and prey, fleeing swiftly before the Assyrian conquerors who would overcome them. And so it proved to be true.

The baby, who was the type of Immanuel, was not yet 12 years old before Damascus had been overthrown by a king of Assyria in 732, and Israel (Samaria) fell before the armies of Sargon in 722 B.C. The Assyrian

hordes so ravished the land of Palestine that the cultivated fields reverted to pasturage and the diet of Maher-shalal-hashbaz would therefore consist of curdled milk and honey rather than the more normal food.

But a further fulfillment centuries later is, without question, in view in this passage, for in chapter 9 the prophet's vision spans the centuries and settles upon a great blessing to come in the land of Galilee: "In earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphthali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (9:1,2 NASB).

It is precisely this region which was to be the home of Jesus the Messiah, and it was from Galilee of the Gentiles that the light began to shine upon Israel in final fulfillment of the prophetic promise. Chapter 9 expands this promise by indicating that Messiah would be born as a human child. He would be of the line of David and yet would become the ultimate ruler of the earth. He would be God Himself and rule as Prince of Peace over the whole world, bestowing prosperity and peace upon the nations in the age to come. Thus the promise reaches even beyond the first coming of Jesus to the second coming as well, and to the millennial kingdom beyond.

The final vision of this section sees the judgment of God falling upon Assyria, who had been God's instrument to judge Samaria and Syria, but in turn became the deserved recipient of God's anger. Even here the judgment extends beyond the immediate fulfillment upon Syria in the eighth century B.C. and describes the ultimate judgment upon the man of sin who will appear in the last days, seen in foreview as the king of Assyria.

The section closes in chapter 11 with the prediction of a shoot coming from the stem of Jesse and a branch growing out of his roots, and of this promised One from the line of David the prophet sings: "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 the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (11:2,3).

These very words are fulfilled by Jesus in His ministry at Nazareth and all Galilee.

The Prediction of Judgments

A large section of the book, from chapters 13 through 23, is given over to judgments predicted upon the nations surrounding Judah. First the rising power of Babylon, which would ultimately overwhelm Assyria and become the greatest kingdom on earth; yet Babylon would ultimately fall to the Medes and the Persians and itself become an uninhabited ruin.

In chapter 14 the prediction of judgment again rises beyond the immediate earthly kingdom of Babylon and sees the satanic power which controls the early nations, describing the sin of Satan which occurred even before the foundation of the earth. "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'" (14:12-14, *NASB*).

Here the difference between the divine and human points of view is clearly evident. Man sees but the earthly kingdoms, the thrones which rise and fall through the passing centuries; but Scripture sees the satanic powers and angelic conflicts behind the earthly events. It is as Paul described in Ephesians 6: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (v. 12 *NASB*).

Judgment is then pronounced upon Israel's ancient enemy, the Philistines, and upon their treacherous relative, Moab, on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea (chaps. 14 through 16). The power of Damascus and Ephraim (northern Israel) shall be brought to ruin, but a gleam of hope appears in the promise that Samaria would have a remnant of believers who would remain true to the living God.

Ethiopia and Egypt are then surveyed and both nations are warned of impending judgment from the Assyrian empire. However, in both cases an ultimate time of repentance and restoration through the mercies of God is predicted, and the final view of Egypt is that of a kingdom brought into godliness and true worship. These promises remain to be fulfilled at some future day (chaps. 18 and 19).

Again Babylon is described in its defeat by Medo-Persia and especially judgment upon her idols. Then Edom's destruction is foretold by the symbolic name, *Dumah*, which means "silent," representing the silence that will fall upon the land as its cities are left desolate and decayed. The Arabian tribes of Dedan and Kedar are put to flight by the conquering Assyrians, and ultimately even Jerusalem itself, in its careless gaiety, shall find its walls broken down and its citizens put under siege. The final burden of judgment falls upon Tyre, the commercial center of the world of the Mediterranean, because of her pride; and yet after 70 years she will be restored, as history confirms (chaps. 21-23).

Warning of Destruction

There follows in chapters 24-35 a series of sermons addressed to the leaders of the nation, giving warning upon warning of all-consuming destruction to come upon all classes of society if the present course of wickedness is not abandoned. Chapters 28 through 33 are especially severe, describing a series of "woes" which will come upon various classes within the nation for their continued unbelief and idolatry. The condition of the nation is described in vivid language: "These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in giving judgment. For all tables are full of vomit, no place is without filthiness" (28:7, 8).

An important passage here reveals God's method of teaching: "Whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (v. 9, 10).

God does not give His message in orderly chapters as men do, with one chapter devoted to a single subject, but the Bible is written with a marvelous intermingling of truth, so that truth is always found balanced with other aspects of truth. This is why the expository study of Scripture is so very important and helps to keep truth in the balance which is necessary to preserve from heresy.

Judah's condition is so bad, however, God must employ a special form of communication to reach those who are turning a deaf ear to His usual warning. Therefore the prophet goes on to say: "Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue; He who said to them, 'Here is rest, give rest to the weary.' and, 'Here is repose,' but they would not listen" (vv. 11,12, NASB).

This is a reference to the coming Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of the land, filling the cities with strangers who will speak alien languages, as a grim confirmation that God keeps His word and punishes disobedience. This passage is quoted by the apostle Paul in chapter 14 of I Corinthians with reference to the gift of tongues, and shows that the purpose of that gift is one of judgment upon the people who should have been the conveyors of the message of deliverance to the nation but who instead were living only for selfish interests. As the apostle states, such strange tongues are "a sign to unbelievers" (see v. 22). The tongues on the Day of Pentecost were such a sign, indicating that God was turning away from a favored position with Israel to the Gentile nations of the world.

But amidst the warnings to Judah there is a radiant burst of promise to those who remain faithful, for the prophet declares that God will lay in Zion a foundation stone, a precious cornerstone who will be utterly trustworthy and who will provide a basis for salvation to individuals and to the nation. Clearly this reference looks ahead to the coming of the Messiah, for Jesus Himself declared that He was that cornerstone.

Further vivid warnings are given, especially to those who seek to rely upon the help of Egypt or any other human aid other than the divine promise. The terrible Day of the Lord is described in frightening terms as crushing both human enemies and the satanic powers which are behind them. But the section closes with a beautiful passage in which God's promise of restoration is described: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make

firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert" (35:3-6).

An Historical Interlude

An historic interlude appears in chapters 36-39 which is recorded in prose style rather than in the poetic form of the rest of the book. It centers upon King Hezekiah, the last of the four kings during whose reign Isaiah prophesied. Rabshakeh, the arrogant general of the king of Assyria, has led a great army against Israel and Judah. Having laid waste the cities of Judah, he now stands before the walls of Jerusalem and impudently demands the surrender of the city. When the report of this demand was brought to King Hezekiah he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the Temple of the Lord. From there he sent word to the prophet Isaiah and the prophet returned a reassuring word that the king was not to be afraid, for God would cause the general to return to Assyria, and this was shortly fulfilled.

However, the king of Assyria renewed the assault and sent an arrogant letter to King Hezekiah again demanding the surrender of the city under pain of its total destruction. Hezekiah took the letter into the Temple and spread it before the Lord and prayed humbly for God's intervention. Again the prophetic word was given that God Himself would defend the city and would keep it safe from the Assyrian assault. That very night the angel of the Lord came among the Assyrians and slew 185,000 in one night. History records it as a great plague which suddenly broke out in the camp. After this, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, departed to his own land where he was murdered by two of his sons and another son, Esar-haddon, reigned in his stead.

Following this great deliverance, King Hezekiah fell sick and Isaiah was sent to him with the word that he was to set his house in order for he would surely die. But once again Hezekiah turned in prayer to the Lord and besought Him for restoration. Once again the prophet Isaiah was sent to the king but this time with a message of mercy and a promise of recovery. Fifteen years additional life had been granted to the king because of his repentance, and as a sign of this divine mercy a remarkable event took place. The shadow on the sun dial in the king's garden turned backward 10 degrees. This meant that the day was lengthened by several hours and would have required a shift in the direction of the axis of the earth. The biblical account does not record any of the results of this in nature, but scientists have learned that there have been times in the past when the earth changed its axial direction, with remarkable suddenness. This event was surely intended to impress King Hezekiah that the God whom he served was the God of life and of death, of time and eternity, and in control of all events and circumstances of earth.

But the significance of it seemed to be lost upon the king, for chapter 39 begins the account of how the king of Babylon sent envoys with letters and presents to Hezekiah after he had recovered from his illness and the foolish king took the Babylonian ambassadors into the treasure house of the palace and showed him all his wealth. When Isaiah heard of this he said to the king: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in Your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord" (39:5, 6).

Thus the first half of the prophecy of Isaiah ends with a shadow of ultimate captivity darkening the future, despite the partial recovery of the nation under Hezekiah.

Salvation Revealed

The last 27 chapters of the book (40-66) present in magnificent language the answer to Isaiah's long search for the salvation of Jehovah. Woven beautifully throughout the book has been the ever-growing revelation of God's love and promise of salvation to be realized in the figure of One who is to come--the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah. At first that figure is dim and shadowy, but gradually it grows brighter and still brighter until in chapter 53 the Suffering Servant who accomplishes the ultimate salvation of God's people fills the whole horizon. It was given to Isaiah to show that the God of transcendent glory, whom he described in chapter 6, is the same God who would one day be "despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces" (53:3).

Isaiah saw how God's love would break the back of man's rebelliousness and, despite his stubborn perversity, would open a way of recovery and restoration.

Then at last, beyond the darkness and gloom of the centuries yet to come, there would be a morning without clouds, the Day of Righteousness when all of God's glory would fill the earth and man would make war no more. They would beat their swords into pruning hooks and their spears into plows, and nothing would hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. This is the magnificent theme of chapters 40-66.

It begins in chapter 40 with a word of comfort declared to the suffering nation and the promise of the appearance of one who would be the forerunner, who would cry in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (40:3). These words were clearly fulfilled by John the Baptist as recorded in the Gospels. The prophet extols the majesty and the greatness of God and contrasts Him with the puny insignificance of the idols whom the people have given in themselves to worship. Then in chapter 42 the Servant of Jehovah is clearly introduced: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law" (42:1-4).

In chapters 43-48 the prophet describes in majestic and marvelous language the unchanging love of God for His people and the power and providential wisdom of God in working out His strange ways through the nations of earth to accomplish His ultimate purposes of redemption and grace.

But in chapters 49-57 the Servant of Jehovah occupies the whole horizon of prophetic vision. First He appears in His birth and early life: "Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.'" (49: 1-3).

Then His character and ministry are described: "The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he awakens, he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (50:4-6).

This prophetic anticipation of the close communion between Jesus and His heavenly Father is expanded in succeeding chapters and is met by the joyful response of those who are touched by the messianic hand of deliverance: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (52:7).

Then in full and glorious vision the description of the actual atoning sacrifice is presented: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (53:5-7)

The passage goes on to imply clearly a resurrection after the suffering and death, for the prophet states: "When he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" (53: 10, 11). Nowhere in all the Bible is there a more lucid view of the person and work of the Redeemer than here in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah! Here, as Peter says, the prophet saw clearly "the sufferings of Christ" (see 1 Pet. 1:11).

But in equally clear vision Isaiah sees beyond to "the glory which should follow." Chapter 54 opens with the

triumphant exhortation to those who have entered into the redemption provided so freely but at such great cost. "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord" (54:1).

The glorious invitation to all who would partake is extended in chapter 55: "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Harken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness" (55:1, 2).

The final chapters from 56-66 are given over primarily to the description of the glory and peace that shall come to the earth when God's King reigns in righteousness. This is also of course fulfilled in the individual within the redeemed spirit. It thus has both a symbolic and a literal fulfillment. Listen to the magnificent language of this promise: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off" (55:12, 13).

The promise of restoration to the nation Israel, the fulfillment of all God declared to David, is clearly stated in chapter 60: "Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I smote you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut; that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste" (60:10-12).

Again in the same chapter the beautiful description continues: "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever." (60:19-21)

As in the book of Revelation, where John the Seer cries out in the closing words, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" so Isaiah ends his prophecy with the prayer of God's people crying: "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence--as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil--to make thy name known to thy adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at thy presence!" (64:1, 2).

Finally, the ultimate end is achieved: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create" (65:17,18).

Before this beautiful day arrives a time of final judgment must be consummated, and the prophet describes it: "For behold, the Lord will come in fire, and his chariots like the stormwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and those slain by the Lord shall be many." (66:15, 16)

But the final scene is one of eternal peace: "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord." (66:22, 23)

Thus the great prophecy of Isaiah presents the theme of all the prophets, the majesty of God and the greatness of His redemptive love. But more clearly than anywhere else in the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah is given to see the divine-human Servant of the Lord who presents His body as an atonement for the sins of God's people and through His suffering obtains a salvation which, entered into by faith, brings deliverance and ultimate restoration of beauty and grace to the individual and to all the earth.

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