

Studies in Isaiah - Part 1

by Harry Ironside

The story of Hezekiah's illness and recovery, and the birth of his son Manasseh, illustrates the mercy and sovereignty of God in preserving the line of succession to the throne of David.

Duration: 45:58

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1, Isaiah 36:1 - 37:17, Isaiah 40:1, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 6:33, John 10:18, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Expository"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing a message from the Lord about a coming battle and the loss of possessions. He then transitions to a section of the book of Isaiah, specifically chapters 40-44, which focus on comforting God's people. The speaker explains that God first reveals their true condition and then offers a remedy. The sermon also highlights the significance of four historical chapters in the life of King Hezekiah, emphasizing his godliness and the fulfillment of God's purpose through him.

Transcript

My wife reminded me immediately after the service was over this morning that I had omitted commenting on the very chapter that I was leading up to. But somewhere or another in my blindness I overlooked it and I was thinking I was on the last chapter of that section when I wasn't. But you know the contents of the final chapter, 35, wasn't it? 35, the wilderness and the sultry place shall be glad for them, and so on.

It's a wonderful picture of the blessing of Messiah's kingdom, the peace and the gladness that will come to earth, the joy that men will have under the personal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. So actually it doesn't require perhaps much further comment than that which was made in a general way regarding that kingdom as we consider this entire portion for it's all one complete section as we saw this morning. And now that leads us up to the next section, four chapters, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

And these, as you know, are of an altogether different character to all the rest of the book. In fact, you may find them duplicated almost exactly in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, and that would lead us to believe that in all likelihood it was Isaiah who was the chosen scribe who kept the kingdom records during the reign of King Hezekiah. That would give him, of course, perfect right without what we call plagiarism to lift a portion of his own writing out of the connection in which it had first been found and bring it over here.

That's something that those of us who try to write books frequently do. We're writing on some subject and then perhaps we're just picking up another and yet a reference comes to that and we feel perfectly free to

pick up what we had written in the other book or in some special article and just bring it over and make it a part of the new one. And so Isaiah, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, no doubt did that.

Now, there was a very special reason, I take it, for giving us these four historical chapters. They all have to do with a son of David who came down to the very verge of death but was raised up again in order that the purpose of God might be fulfilled. And that, of course, points forward to our Lord Jesus Christ who went down into death, actually, and was raised up again to carry out God's counsel.

The four chapters have to do with certain events in the life of King Hezekiah. Now, King Hezekiah was one of the godliest men that ever sat upon the throne of Judah, but he was just like other men in one respect. He was likely to give way at times to discouragement and to doubt and fear, but he had a very faithful mentor in Isaiah, the prophet himself, to whom he turned from time to time for help and encouragement.

In the first chapter of this section, we find the armies of Sennacherib led by Rabshaker, one of his generals, marching down upon the land of Palestine and surrounding the city of Jerusalem. Hezekiah, knowing of the coming of the enemy, had taken all proper precautions to cut off supplies. For instance, he had stocked certain pounds of water and had turned aside others in order that Jerusalem itself might be properly supplied with water, but that the Assyrian army, it's difficult sometimes to keep those two in mind, one the Assyrian, the other the Assyrian.

The Assyrian was from the north, the Assyrian from the northeast. And in order that they might not find water, he stocked certain of the water courses. And so he took other precautions, strengthening the walls of the city and so on.

But the armies of the Assyrians surrounded the city and prepared to assault it. And Rabshaker, the general, called upon the leaders of Israel to surrender the city without undergoing the horrors of the bombardment of battering rams and so on, and promising them a certain measure of immunity from punishment if they did. The king of Syria, he said, would simply carry them away to other lands, but their lives would be spared, otherwise they would be completely destroyed.

He warned them not to listen to any proclamation made by King Hezekiah that the God in whom they trusted would be able to deliver them. For he said, you know what Hezekiah has done. He's gone all through the country destroying the shrines of the gods, and instead of delivering them, the gods will be against him.

Have the gods of any of the other lands delivered their people? And they called upon him, our king, and his mighty armies of triumph over all their gods. Rabshaker, of course, didn't understand that the shrines and idols that had been destroyed were not representatives of the true God of Israel and Judah, but that these were idols and symbols of idolatry that had been brought over from the nation. Hezekiah had gone all through the land destroying these shrines, breaking down these idols, and seeking to call the people back to the worship of the one true and living God.

As Rabshaker went on talking and blaspheming the God of Israel, the Jewish leaders begged him not to speak in the Jewish language which the ordinary people could understand, but to speak to them in the Assyrian which they were able to understand. But he angrily declared, no, he wanted the people to understand. He wanted them to know the terrible doom that was coming upon them if they followed King Hezekiah.

Well, Hezekiah, in his distress, laid the matter before the Lord, went into the sanctuary of Jehovah and prayed about it, and sent word to Isaiah telling him all that had taken place, inviting him to intercede on their behalf. Then later there came to Hezekiah a letter of blasphemy from the leaders of the Assyrian army, a letter blaspheming the God of Judah, and again demanding the surrender of the city. We're told that Hezekiah went up into the sanctuary of the Lord and he laid the letter of blasphemy before the Lord.

He poured out his heart to God about it, and God answered through Isaiah telling him that the Assyrian army would be completely defeated, in fact that the great bulk of them would never leave the land of Judah but would die there. You remember what happened, you remember how that army was gathered all about the city and one evening as the people of Judah looked over the walls, they could see the campfires burning and the hosts of the Assyrians all about them, so confident that within a very short time they would be able to subdue the city of Jerusalem as they had subdued so many other capitals of the nations against which they had fought. Now, that night we're told that the angel of the Lord went out through the camp of the Assyrians and he smote them, so that, and here's a rather peculiar grammatical form in the scripture, if you'll notice it, it says, When they awoke in the morning, behold, they were all dead men.

Of course, it's the awkward way in which the translators have rendered it. Their point was that when the people of Judah awoke in the morning and looked out over the walls, the Assyrian hosts had been smitten and dead. I don't think anything finer has ever been written in a poetical line than that wonderful poem by Lord Byron, that poor young Muslim who had such a miserably unhappy life and died in the flower of his youth on the battlefields of Greece.

You hope sometimes as you read his life story that he got through to heaven. I don't know. But his, many of his poems indicate the utter hopelessness of his life.

You remember he wrote, My days are in the yellow leaf, the flower, he was only 27 when he wrote this, My days are in the yellow leaf, the flower, the fruit of life is gone, the worm, the canker, and the grief of mine alone. And he says, if he looks back over his life, there rose not one day or one hour when all that life or the world could give could tempt me to live on. He was a mutterly disillusioned young man.

Everything had turned to ashes, it were, because he'd lived for self and lived for pleasure, lived to gratify every desire. Yet he tried to redeem himself by offering himself as a soldier to help the Greeks in their fight against the Turks. He wrote that poem, you remember, The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold, his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold and so on.

The most graphic description of what we have here in this chapter, you can see how clearly he visualizes that great, heathen host and their jubilation with the thought that they're going to destroy the people of God and will soon capture the temple of Jehovah as they've captured other people's mother temples. And then how the angel of the Lord went forth and smote them and the whole army was destroyed. Well, that was the effect, that was the result.

When King Hezekiah, receiving a letter of blasphemy, went in and spread it out before the Lord. You know, when we get letters of that kind, it's very natural to spread them out before the Lord. It's very natural to go to God about them.

But as we go on in this story, we find another letter came to Hezekiah later on, a letter with a present, and he didn't spread that out before the Lord. And he brought grave trouble upon himself and all the kingdom by his carelessness in that regard. We don't quite come to that for the moment, so we'll just leave it until

we reach the last chapter.

Now then, following the, we have, you get this history then three times recorded in the Bible. In the books of 2nd Kings, 2nd Chronicles, and here in Isaiah. And this very man, Sennacherib, this great monarch, returning to his own land because of a rumor that had come to him of a rebellion.

He was slain by his own sons, and so the campaign against Judah came to an abrupt end. And God interfered to save his people, even as he had declared he would do from the very beginning. Then in the third chapter of this section, we have something of very grave importance.

Something the importance of which we may not see at first sight. A manifest effort of Satan to destroy the house of David, and then the marvelous way in which God undertook to save it. Hezekiah was sick, sickened to death.

The trouble seems to have been a terrible, poisonous carbuncle. If any of you have ever had the joy of a carbuncle in the back of your neck, you know something of it. Then the king's very life was draining away with this awful boil or carbuncle.

And he sent word to Isaiah, and Isaiah sent the word back to him, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt surely die. Now, that was a very serious thing. You see, God had declared that the Messiah, the Savior, was coming through the house of David.

Hezekiah was the defendant of the house of David. That at this time, if he had died at this time, he would have left no one to take his place. He had no son.

He had no son. And therefore, if his death had ensued as a result of this illness, the promise made to David would seem to be defeated. Now, God, of course, might have had other resources.

Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary came through the line of Nathan and not through Solomon, and still was of the house of David, so God might have had someone else in reserve. But there's no record of that. Hezekiah was the true son of David in the direct Messianic line.

And here he was at the point of death. It looks as though God's plan was going to fail. And then the amazing thing was that God, for the moment, seemed to acquiesce in it.

For when Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah begging him to pray for his deliverance, that answer came back. Set thine house in order, for thou shalt surely die and not live. Now we get an instance of how little Old Testament saints, the best of them, appreciated the true meaning of the grace and goodness of God.

When Hezekiah got that message, instead of being able to rejoice in view of death, as Christians can do today if they're in fellowship with God, he turned his face to the wall, and he said, while the child lives, I prayed that if it pleased God he might still heal the child, but now he's gone. He cannot return to me, but I shall go to him, showing clear belief and faith in immortality. I shall go to him.

And there are other intimations in the Old Testament showing that Old Testament saints did have a measure of light in regard to life beyond the grave and, eventually, resurrection. But, as a rule, these things weren't clear to people, and Hezekiah was in dire distress when he learned that he was to die and not live. And he prayed, and he wept, and he pleaded with God to prolong his life.

You know, I don't know that what Hezekiah is just as good in that regard as a good many of us. We talk about being ready to go to heaven and longing for heaven, but most of us, you know, if something suddenly struck us and we thought we might go to heaven before morning, we'd want every doctor in the town to try to keep us out of it just as long as possible. That's the way we go at it, you know.

I remember a rather amusing incident last year up at Mount Rose. Two years? Yes, last year up at Mount Rose. Our good brother George Edson, the singer, had been singing a song one evening.

I often am homesick for heaven. You know that song. There'll be no disappointment in heaven.

And people were quite moved at the pathetic way in which he sang, I often am homesick for heaven. The dear fellow looked as though he was just about to leave the platform and soar to realms of glory. But that night, while a few of them were in the tea room, something had happened.

The disconcerted them. It happened that a boy, playing with one of the ketchup containers, had ground the top of it so that the glass had broken and was all scattered through the ketchup. And several of the folks putting the ketchup on their hamburgers found they were chewing broken glass.

And when George found that, he said, My, I wish I could get a doctor. I don't feel near as homesick for heaven as I was. And I think, you know, most of us, a lot of our talk about longing to go to heaven is just a kind of mere sentimentalism.

We really want to live. And it's perfectly right that we should desire to live. If to live means to glorify God.

For the apostle Paul tells us in the 5th chapter of 2nd Corinthians that we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed. We don't long to die, but clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. That's the real thing.

We long for the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. And while we wait for that glorious event, we can thank God for prolonged lives here on earth if those lives mean greater opportunity to glorify God, greater opportunity to reach others with the gospel, and be a means of blessing to a poor, needy world. But here was Hezekiah, and after his godly life, and after the real revival and blessing that had come to Judah through his leadership, now when he hears he's going to die, he seems to be in utter despair.

It wasn't that he thought his soul was lost, but he felt as though to leave this world, to give up his work here, meant that practically for him everything was over. And so, in his distress, he cried to God, and God heard him. You see, there was something important there, and that was this.

There was no heir to the throne, and so God heard him, and He sent a word by Isaiah saying to him, The Lord hath added unto thy life fifteen years. And then he said, now if you want to be assured of this, ask a sign of the Lord. Shall the shadow on the dial of Ahaz... Ahaz was his father, and he evidently had made a dial, a sundial, and placed it in the garden of the palace.

Now he said, shall the shadow on the dial of Ahaz go forward or backward a certain number of degrees? And Hezekiah said, well, it wouldn't mean so much if it went forward. The sun might be so clouded, you know, that perhaps the shadow would go forward. But if it goes backward, then I would know it was a direct act of God.

And God answered him. I can't explain that. Don't come to me after a meeting and say, what do you know about the dial of Ahaz? Go to Harry Rimmer, he knows all about it.

I've heard him make it all very clear. He understands the whole thing. He understands all about the long days of Joshua.

Everything like that. But I don't. I haven't got the scientific knowledge that Harry Rimmer has, and maybe it's, and I haven't got the imagination either.

It takes very keen imagination sometimes to explain some things. But I'll tell you what I can do. I can believe God.

And God's word tells me that the shadow went backward on the dial of Ahaz. And what follows afterwards shows that it was something that took place in the universe that was known not only in the land of Judah, but as far away as in the city of Babylon. And Babylon was celebrated for its stargazers, its astronomers, and its astrologers.

And so they saw, they heard all about this. And eventually, as we shall see, they sent to inquire. Well, Hezekiah then came back from the dead, as it were.

God raised up this son of David from the very brink of the grave in order to fulfill his word. And yet now, see how there are wheels within wheels in the divine government. Ezekiel pictures that in the most remarkable way.

The house of David must be preserved. There must be a series of children of sons born in the regular line of succession, the line of succession to the throne of David. And yet, and so the Lord permitted Hezekiah to live.

And it was during these 15 years, in the first of them, that Manasseh was born. And now see the other side of it. Manasseh became the wickedest king that ever sat upon the throne of Judah.

So, looking at it from one standpoint, one could say it would have been well for the kingdom of Judah if Hezekiah had died at the time that he was so ill because of this boy, the Carbuncle. It would have been well for the kingdom of Judah if he had gone home to heaven at that time. But on the other hand, the line then would have been broken.

And God, may I put it this way without seeming to be irreverent, and will you not misunderstand, God took the risk of allowing Hezekiah's life to be prolonged, and a son to be born, knowing full well that that son would become the wickedest king that ever sat upon the throne of Judah. He tried to undo everything that his father had done. Hezekiah had destroyed the altars of idolatry, had swept the land clear of idols.

Manasseh brought in more forms of idolatry than is ever known before, and he went to spiritist mediums and filled the land with those who professed to be able to talk with the dead, and so on. And he brought down the indignation of God upon Judah because of the corruption and sins committed. Yet, isn't it wonderful to think of the mercy of God? At last an old man, some fifty years of age, and almost facing eternity, God brought that godless king to repentance.

Manasseh broke down, confessed the sins of a long ungodly life, undertook again to try to cleanse the land from its idols, tried to bring about a reformation that was too late. He did his part so far as he could,

but it was too late to recover the people. His son Amon went right on in the sins of the father.

But in the next generation, God came in in wondrous grace again and raised up another son of David, King Josiah, who honored the Lord from his very youth and was the means of bringing about a great revival in Judah. Well, sometime after this, that is, after the raising up of King Hezekiah from the dead, then you notice how God used means for that. Sometimes we're told by certain people that God is the healer and we must never use any kind of remedy, medicines or anything.

Now, I believe in the healing power of God, and I'm not ashamed to say, and I tell people that, that I'm praying earnestly that God will heal my eyes, and if he does, I'll give him the glory openly for healing my eyes without my having to take time off to go through an operation for it. But I'm not neglectful of remedies. I'm using certain remedies which already I realize have begun to help me.

I can do today what I couldn't do just five days ago. When I stood up here five days ago, about the only people whom I could see were those in the front row. Today I can see you're back to the fifth row, so you better behave that way.

But I'm using remedies, and yet I'm asking the Lord to do the work. God gave the remedy, and God works through remedies, and the Lord Jesus said, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Well, supply the predicate, they that are sick need a physician.

They that are sick do need a physician. The Lord said that. You remember that story of the old, the man who got up in a meeting once, and he said, my friends, the Lord is my physician, but I don't need any other doctor.

And the little old Scotch lady sitting in the front seat and noticing the gold in his teeth, looked up and said, aye, but who's your dentist? You see, when I get the redemption of my body, when I get the redemption of my body, which I shall have at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I won't need a dentist any more than I need a doctor. I'll have a perfect body in every particular. Now I need the dentist, and I need the doctor.

And so when Isaiah sent the word that the Lord was going to raise up Hezekiah, he didn't just say to him, now you claim it by faith and jump off the bed and say you're healed. But he said, make a poultice of figs and put it upon the boil. And if you ever had anything like that, and tried a poultice of figs, you know how it can draw.

It's one of the very best remedies for pulling the filth out of the boil. And so God used that remedy for the healing of the king. Well, the word of this healing got a way over to Madison.

And they learned there of the wonder done in the land, of the going back of the dial of Ahaz, of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz. And so we're told in the last chapter of this section that there came ambassadors from the king of Babylon. And they came, you know, with a smile.

They came with outstretched hands. They came in a friendly way. And they came bringing a letter and a present from the king of Babylon.

And who was the king of Babylon? Well, we've already seen he was Satan's direct representative here on the earth. Just as the king on the throne of David was God's representative, so the king of Babylon was Satan's representative. And the day was to come when all the power of Babylon would be brought against Judah.

But this time, you see, they come in this insinuating way. How characteristic that is of the devil. He doesn't always come against every one of us as a roaring lion.

He's more likely to come, first of all, as an angel of light. And so these ambassadors came from the king of Babylon. And they came bringing a letter.

And a present was the letter. And what happened? Oh, as a coward, he's like, shut up. I think he says to himself, my, this is interesting.

The king of Babylon, he recognizes what an important person I am. See the nice letter he sent. I think he goes into his wife and he says, my dear, would you look at that? Why? Because that's from the king of Babylon.

And look at the beautiful text. Aren't these things love? As you know, they blinded his eyes to the true nature of the ambassadors from Babylon. When he got the letter of blasphemy, he spread it out before the Lord.

When he got the letter and the present, he chuckled over it and said, this is wonderful. And he wasn't on his guard. And so then he called the ambassadors of Babylon.

He says, I want to show you what I've got here. And I think he took real pride in going about this with it all. Isn't this wonderful? And they looked at it and they gasped, oh my, that's great.

And in their hearts they're saying, someday we'll get it all ourselves. And he went all through the palace showing them all these things, you know, gloating over his treasures. And he didn't realize what a fool he was making of himself.

I was reminded of the time when St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Roman Catholic theologian, and I think you'll see St. Thomas in heaven even though he wasn't Roman Catholic. But St. Thomas Aquinas came to see the Pope of his day. And you know, the Pope did just the very thing Hezekiah did.

He took St. Thomas all through the papal palace and he showed him the paintings and he showed him the tapestries and he showed him the treasures and the magnificent furniture. And he took him into his treasury and he opened up great trunks and showed him trunks full of silver and gold and of costly pearls and gems of all kinds. And St. Thomas with his bare feet and his shaggy robes was there looking on.

And the Pope turned to him and he said, you see Thomas, we can't say today as the first Pope said, silver and gold have our number. Thomas said, no, neither can you say as he said, but in the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk. There's a rebuke to the man who had just gathered together all this wealth and was gloating over it, but he only had a religion without power.

Well, poor Hezekiah, he's literally carried away, you see, by the articulation of these men. He shows them everything that's in the house. And then he sends them away.

He just loads it down with presents back to their own land. And a little later, I think there's a knock at the door. Somebody comes in and says to the King, Your Majesty, Isaiah the Pope.

Oh, yes. I think you've got a little bit of it. And in comes the old man.

And he says to him, see you've been having visitors. He said, who were they? Well, it was an ambushage from the King of Babylon. Look what they've given me.

Oh, my, they brought me a letter and they brought me all these things. And what did they see in your house? Oh, they've seen everything. I just took them through the whole thing.

You haven't seen it. I apologize, you know, as they saw the wonderful things I have here. I just showed them that.

You just showed them that. Well, I've got a message from the Lord for you. The day is coming when everything that's in your house will be carried away to Babylon.

You've just been exposing your own weakness. Everything will be carried away to Babylon. And then he went on to tell him of the judgments that were coming in Judah through that very people.

Oh, the old man said, I don't know what to say. But he finally says, well, bless the Lord. Anyway, it won't come in my lifetime.

It's better him because he's seen some good in him. And it was coming after days. It's kind of a case of after us today.

And so Hezekiah just accepted it with the best grace that he could. But what a lesson there is in it for us today. I repeat, it's so easy.

If a letter of blasphemy comes, it's spread about before the Lord. On the other hand, we're so apt to be deceived and misled. If it's a letter with a prayer.

You know, you're taking connection with the work of the Lord. So often all kinds of dates are offered to preachers in order to get them to fall in with certain combinations and certain systems and things and all that kind of thing. And men who can stand against the most violent opposition to the truths of God's word have often succumbed to flackery and to the offer of place and power if they would only fall in with existing conditions.

How we need to remember that we can trust our own judgment. We need to depend fully and wholly upon God. And it's just as important to refer that letter that offers you a church with a salary of five to ten thousand dollars a year for the Lord as it is to refer that matter as to whether you'll go to that little country place and preach where perhaps you'll get fifty dollars a week and a few dozen eggs and a couple of chickens from the farmers around.

The thing is to lay everything before the Lord and let him guide and direct. The Lord Jesus says, I'm he that openeth and no man shutteth and no man openeth. Well this brings us then to the close of the first part of the book of Isaiah.

And so next week we go in for the last part which deals in a very wonderful way with the glory of the coming kingdom. Now we turn to the book of Isaiah again and today we begin 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. But now we take up the last chapters beginning with chapter forty and going on of course eventually to chapter sixty-six. 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. The minute I stand up here somewhere or another 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 forty, 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 scope.

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. They also object, they also claim that it could not be the work of a man who lived in the days of Uzziah Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah because of the fact that he speaks definitely of Cyrus, King Cyrus, through whom the remnant of Israel were to be 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 Mao 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, of course, it would be heresy to call Sir Robert Anderson a heretic. And Bishop Mao was his great tutor, and of course we wouldn't think of Bishop Mao 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 us. 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 that, 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 with that, 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... I don't know, 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 is awful good to a blind old man.

From chapter 49 to 57, we have Jehovah's controversy with Israel concerning their attitude toward the Messiah. That's looking a way 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... There's no peace for the one who puts anything else in the place of the one proven 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 my people." "...Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem. Tell her that her warfare is accomplished. She has 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, for 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 has rewarded double for all her sins.

God will never... Elijah is very clear about that in speaking to Job, you remember, where he says that God will not lay...

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