

Allan MacRae: Isaiah 1-6: Lecture 3

Biblical Theological Seminary, 1976

Now for October 11th for next week the assignment is a rather brief one. It is simply to read over the fifth chapter of Isaiah and make a general outline of that chapter, putting together those verses that make up a section with the same topic, but is a different topic from what precedes or follows. Give a brief title to each section that you make and then also if as you read it you notice something that seems to you to be rather specifically related to something that we've already looked at in Isaiah 1 – 4 or 56 – 57, which were included in the assignment I gave you earlier or in some other part of the Bible, if it occurs to you that these sections are related as you go through them, please mention that. Now the assignment I'd like to have done without looking at any commentary or looking up any marginal notes in the annotated Bible you have. That is to say, I'd be interested in seeing what you see from your own recollection, or your own knowledge, or your own observations, because my primary purpose in all places in the Bible is not to see what somebody else has said or thought, but to train you in methods of finding out for yourself what the Bible said. Now after you have done that, then if you want to look up marginal notes in your Bible, footnotes in your Bible, or commentaries, or anything that is extra--not assigned--I'm glad to have you do it if you feel like it. But if you do, please mention that you've done so on your paper and say what you've used. And of course, you might mention what version you were using at the beginning of the paper. I don't care what version you've used for this assignment, but I'd like to know what version you are using anyway.

Now our purpose in this course is to learn how to find what is in the Bible. Some people have a very magical idea of the Bible. They pick out 3 or 4 words, and here is God's truth. They're like the Episcopalian minister, rector I guess they call him, who once gave a sermon with the title, "Hear the church." Of course that was from the verse in Matthew 18 that said, "and if he will not hear the church

then call him as an unbeliever". That's after describing the way to deal with disagreements between individuals, and so on. If you are one of the parties, you see the other first alone. Eventually you may have to bring the matter before the church, and if he will not "hear the church," he is to be treated as an unbeliever. So these words "hear the church", were taken out of context. Now the bishop was present, and afterwards, the rector was expecting to be highly complimented by the bishop on his sermon, but the bishop simply turned to him and said, "I have another verse for you that you might want to do a sermon on." He said this verse is "hang all the law and the prophets", you know Jesus said, "Upon this hang all the laws and the prophets." In this way the bishop humorously pointed out the rector's mistake. Well, unfortunately, many people will take 3 or 4 words that way out of context and build up some crazy doctrine. Of course, all words in the Bible are tremendously important, but some words you might say are simply transitional words. Some words are absolutely clear and definite, and some words are possible to be translated in 2 or 3 different ways. There are people who are making a tremendous fuss about the fact that an earlier ancient manuscript doesn't have every word in it found in some of the later manuscripts, and if a translation is made from early manuscripts, they say "all this translation doesn't believe in the deity of Christ because it leaves out this statement about the deity" that appears in a later manuscript. Such an attitude, I think, just like this attitude of the person who suggested we should "hang the law on the prophets." In other words, this attitude takes words of Scripture as magical words instead of as an attempt, in spite of the very difficult and weak instrument that human language is, of using that instrument to present the truth of God. And so when we say the Bible is inspired and free from error, we don't mean you can take 3 words out of context and get God's truth. We mean that in the Bible, carefully studied, you cannot find anything clearly stated that is not part of God's truth. We can draw a lot of conclusions, but what you clearly find taught there you can stand on. That's what we mean by saying the Bible is verbally inspired. But these words do not convey

false ideas if correctly interpreted. And that, of course, is my great stress in this course. We do not want to read into the Bible, but to find what is there.

Now this is particular to the case when we come to matters on which consecrated Christians differ. One such matter is the matter of the millennium. If a person is thoroughly convinced that there is to be a millennium, as I am, then such a person can go to the Bible and he may find in light of his conviction, new evidence that nobody ever realized before relating to the millennium. There is value in that approach. But there are people who do not think the millennium is taught in the Bible. I believe it is particularly valuable on all such matters to go to the Bible and not say, e.g. "can I fit this into the teaching of the millennium?" But "does this prove there is a millennium?" Do you see the difference? There are these two approaches and there's value in both. But I believe that this second approach is absolutely necessary. Upon all on which we are going to stand strongly, and which we are going to insist upon as the word of God, we should be able to say "these passages prove it" not "I think this passage must be related to it."

Now we asked the question at the end of the last hour as to whether the last part of chapter one relates to the millennium. I think you can see there verse 25 thru 28 of Isaiah 1 reads: "I will turn my hand upon thee and purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy sins. And I will restore thy judges as of the first and thy counselors as of the beginning. Afterwards, you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and the sinners shall be together and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." Now this twenty-eighth verse is not out of context. It really does relate to the question whether this passage relates to the millennium.

We look at those words, "I will turn my hand upon thee and purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy sins." That might be said of those who are believing in the millennium that God does this to them. But it might also be a prediction of God's taking the people off into captivity. The Israelites tended to

fall into idolatry during all of their history up to the time of the exile. And during all of that period we find constant attacks on idolatry in the writing of the prophets. But we do not find Christ criticizing the people of his day, at least the Israelites of his day, that they were worshipping idols. In the exile, those that leave to return from the exile to Jerusalem were thoroughly weaned away from idolatry and from that phase of heathenism. And therefore, one can say that, in a sense in that regard and in certain other regards at least, that this statement that “I will purely purge away thy dross and take away thy sins” could be a prediction of what is going to happen in connection with the millennium.

Now if someone wants to say "no this is referring to what is going to happen in the great tribulation," well, something similar may happen in the Great Tribulation, but you can't prove it from this verse. If I tell you I'm going to go to Philadelphia, and there I'm going to buy a new suit, and if I do that next week, you can quote my words six months from now and say that I am still going to do it. I may do it next weekend or six months from now. But if I make the statement and fulfill the statement, the statement has been fulfilled. If I would say, “I am going to go to Philadelphia *frequently* and buy new suits there, then when I went once it *would not* fulfill the statement. But when a prediction is made and can be conceived of as having been fulfilled, we may say that it is *similar* to events that will take place later, but we have no right to say it is a prediction of an event that is going to happen later.

Now the passage continues “...and I will restore thy judges as at the first and thy counselors as at the beginning.” How were Israel's judges at the first, how were their counselors at the beginning? We read of great judges in the history of Israel: we read of Samuel, we read of Gideon, we read of many other judges and counselors whom God marvelously used. But we do not find that their condition was a perfect condition in any of those periods. If you want to say there is a similarity between this and something God is going to do in the millennium, that means there's going to be some sort of a similar organization in the millennium to

what there was then. That you can prove from this passage if you prove the passage is about the millennium. But you can't prove the passage is about the millennium from this statement. This statement can just as well be taken as saying after returning from exile, there will be men like Ezra, like Nehemiah, men like the Maccabees who gave their life for their loyalty to their God. Men who are worthy to stand in every regard as the equal of the men who were judges and counselors of Israel in earlier days.

And the statement afterwards "Thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City." Well certainly, there were centuries after the time of the exile when despite their sin, their wickedness, and their failure the Jews nevertheless did become known as a group that were ready, many of them, to give their lives for their belief in the one true God. It is pretty hard to prove that this could not be a prediction of that period.

The statement that follows: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness." In this statement there is an unfortunate translation. The word rendered there as "converts" is simply the participle of the Hebrew word "to return." And so literally it is "those who return." Well, that could certainly be a reference to those who returned from the exile but it does not have to be. The idea of returning is used not only in a material sense; it is also used in a figurative sense. And so it is quite proper to translate "those who return" as "those who return to the Lord/those who become converted." But the translation "convert," while not an incorrect translation, is a translation which takes only a small part of the meaning of the word, and I believe it is better to translate it literally as "those who return" and then allow the possibility of taking it as a spiritual return. It is interesting to notice that this statement, which in the King James is "her converts," in the New American Standard Bible is translated "her repenting ones." And "her repenting ones" is perhaps slightly nearer the original than "her converts" because it is a definite act of returning, spiritually. But then the NIV has gone one step further, and it says not "her repenting ones" but "her penitent ones." Now

penitence simply describes a state of mind. And the Hebrew "*shav*" does not describe a state of mind, it describes a *change*. In *most* people it produces a visible change. Maybe the word can refer to a spiritual journey, but certainly not a state of mind. Either way, this is important enough for me to write and share my thoughts with the editor of the NIV. I have a lot of other matters to write to him about that are more important, but I may reference this as well when I write. The editor had specifically asked me for suggestions, and so I certainly shall make some that I think are important and I may make this one about penitence, for it is certainly not the full representation of the Hebrew.

Now, if you want to say here is a picture that describes what will happen in the millennium, perhaps what happens in the millennium will be exactly like this. I do not wish to fight with someone who says this is a picture of the millennium. But I do wish to say you can't prove the millennium from this because it can very well be a picture of the fact that God is going to bring the Israelites back from the north from the Babylonian exile, and going to give them very great blessings at that time, not in the future time we call the millennium.

Now we can go on with our regular outline and I have condensed the first part of it that I will put up, so as not to repeat matters that we have already discussed. We are discussing Roman numeral III. "The Glory Of the Promise in Isaiah 2:1-5," and in our discussion of it we noted most interpreters, albeit, reluctantly, think that it is a passage that describes a period when there is to be no external danger, a period when there is no need of defense, a period when there is nothing to fear. I read to you the exposition by one of the church fathers that we may think of as early but actually it's about 300 years after the time of Christ. Something that was 300 years ago we think of as quite a long time ago. When we speak of them, of those early fathers, we seem to think they have a special importance. They certainly have a blessing for us in their writings. But this church father said that the vine and fig tree here show God's protection, that the vine and the fig tree represent the protection God will give. How will the vine and

the fig tree provide you protection? The vine and the fig tree are simply given as a picture of the possibility of sitting out doors, outside of the city, out to the open field and there sitting down under your vine and under your fig tree to escape the sun. You have no fear, whatever; it shows a time when there is no external danger, no need of defense, nothing to fear.

Now I just mentioned at the end of the hour chapter D- "The Fulfillment of Belief" - and under this I looked at four subjects, and I mentioned a fifth that the manner of fulfillment is not entirely specified here. It begins here with telling how the law will go forth from Jerusalem and the word of God from Zion. But whether this is necessarily the beginning of what is here described or whether it is a statement of what will occur at another time is not specifically stated. The early Christians took it as the manner of fulfillment. They said Christ was born in Bethlehem, he preached in Jerusalem, from Jerusalem the word of God began and went out to the world, and after the end of the first or second century, they said, this word is going to conquer the world and thus all the world will have a time of absolute peace. And then some of them said, "yes, we had marvelous peace for 300 years." The world indeed enjoyed not complete peace, but such peace as the world had never known before because the Roman armies were present, preventing people from fighting, and this began about twenty-years before Christ was born, so they said the kingdom of Christ spends its influence back before He was born. Which is a beautiful, but rather irrational, idea. Certainly, the birth of Christ in Bethlehem has nothing to do with Augustus's conquering of Egypt and establishing a condition of peace such that the world had not seen before. And after 3 or 4 centuries, the Roman peace, or Pax Romana, completely broke down and all areas of the Roman Empire became a section where roaming tribes were fighting one another. And literacy in the empire, which might have been 90 or 95% decreased to maybe 5 or 10% at the very most. And the terrible dark ages began. Then the Heathens turned against the Christians who said Christianity is proved by this period of absolute peace. When it came to an end, Christianity had

fallen and along with it the fact that this passage is not a prediction of the 300 year peace of that time; it is something yet to come in the future.

We are left with how this passage is going to be fulfilled. Well, it will be entirely possible as far as this passage is concerned, for us to say, "The word of God going out from Jerusalem is going to reach all people to the extent where they will all say, 'Let's turn to the light. Let's go to Jerusalem. Let's go to the Lord Jesus Christ who is in the heavenly Jerusalem; let us find from him how he wants us to live.'" And thus there will be established a condition of absolute peace throughout the world. Now it looks a lot more like that might have happened 50 years ago than it does today, let's say 80 years ago was more possible than it might happen today. During this century (20th) there have been about as many wars as any century in history. And it does not appear, at present, that there's much likelihood of their stopping. I understand that Russia's spending about 25% of its total production on preparation for war every year; we're spending about 5% of our GDP, and there are those who are making big protests against that. Just why the Russians are putting all this into war preparation when there's people many of whom are half-starved and would like to have part of that, or at least have more to eat, is something they have not explained. But that a condition of peace is going to continue for a long time certainly appears extremely unlikely.

And so when someone says, "The gospel is going to go on and on and conquer more and more nations, more and more people until we have absolute freedom from war all over the world, and this is going to last for a long, long time," well, if the Bible definitely predicted that I would say "certainly," though everything looks contrary. I would believe God can say what he wants to do. But the passage does not specifically say that that is what is going to happen. In fact, it sounds a bit different, because it says that he will reprove all nations that are afar off and He will judge among the nations, and it sounds as if a strong force is going to establish peace. So that just as the Romans fought over areas of Europe, and North Africa, and part of the Middle East and established peace, it appears to me

that the Lord himself is going to establish power on this earth, and no one will think of making war because they will have had no opportunity to do it, and nobody will need to prepare for war because there's nobody else who would dare make war. A condition, at any rate, of external peace and safety will be brought about in one of these two ways. On the basis of passages of Micah 4 and of Isaiah 11, I believe we can dogmatically say that there is to be such a long period. The New Testament says a thousand years—six times it says a thousand years. I'm not going to fight for those who say a thousand is simply a round number, but I'm not going to think that it could be a round number for 10 seconds versus 10 minutes. It would seem to me that it would have to be a long period of time. And therefore it seems to me that the Bible clearly states that there is to be a millennial reign of Christ upon this earth, but I don't think that we should try to prove that by these last verses of chapter one. I do believe that chapter two, however, very definitely shows a period in which there will be complete external freedom from external danger.

Now # 6, note Micah 4:4c. We have noticed how in Micah 4:1-3 we have almost the exact parallel to Isaiah 2:2-4. But Micah for the first three fourths of the verse has no exact parallel in Isaiah, but it simply stresses and drives home that fact, which is rather clearly taught in the previous verse, very clearly taught I would say, that there is to be a time of no external danger, no need of defense, nothing to fear. But the last part of Micah 4 says, "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." In other words, Micah says this prediction of a world free from war, the world's freedom from external danger, is such a tremendous thing, that in order for you to believe that, you must know that actually the mouth of the Lord has said it. "God has given me this vision." is what Micah is saying. Well, now is there any parallel to the word in Isaiah 2. Personally, I believe that there is. I believe that that is why Isaiah put in verse 1 of chapter 2 the phrase "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judea and Jerusalem." This is the equivalent of what Micah said when he said, "for the mouth of the lord has

spoken." It looks, I think, rather silly for the average person approaching the book of Isaiah--certainly it did for me before I studied it--to have the book start with verse 1 telling you that these are the visions that Isaiah had, which serve as an excellent introduction to the whole book, and then in the very next chapter the same introduction is repeated. Now that wouldn't be silly if he did that for every chapter or even every 10 chapters. But there's not more than 7 or 8 cases where the word Isaiah even occurs in the book. We have it in 1:1 that the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, and the days of the various kings, and in chapter 2 we have this again, but we don't have the word "Isaiah" again until Isaiah 7 verse 3 telling us of his meeting with Ahab where he says there what the Lord said unto Isaiah. And then in chapter 13 verse 1 we have the "burden of Babylon," which Isaiah did see, which begins this way, "the burden of" not merely in one chapter, but appears at about a dozen chapters dealing with other nations and showing what God says is going to happen to them.

In chapter 20 verse 2 it says the lord spoke to Isaiah, and in verse 2 and in verse 3 it says Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for a year. And then in chapter 37-39, where you have a historical account of Isaiah's relations with Hezekiah you find the word "Isaiah" ten times and then never again in the whole book. So aside from chapter 13 verse 1, where it introduces a long passage of about a dozen chapters of a type quite different from most of the rest of the book, such a title occurs only in the beginning of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2, and that seems rather not a very sensible arrangement if you take it as a heading for a group of chapters. Why give a heading and then give it again unless you are going to do it all the way through? I believe that chapter 2 verse 1 is a heading for the next 5 verses only. Isaiah realizes he's giving a tremendous prediction, such a prediction that's almost impossible for one to believe, and is particularly difficult for those Israelites to believe. Note the context. The Egyptians south of them and Assyrians northeast of them are clashing and fighting each other. And the Assyrian army is coming and overrunning Israel to the north, which was twice as

large as Judah, and Assyria was also overrunning most of Judah, taking Lachish, the second largest city in Judah captive. In those conditions for three years nobody dared to go out and sit under their vine or their fig tree. But Isaiah is saying, "You might find it difficult to believe. You may say Micah has said it and that's wonderful that we will have peace, but how do we know Micah is a true prophet of God? Answer: God gave me the same vision." Here is a vision that Isaiah has seen. It is as though Isaiah is saying, "God has enabled me to give my word to what Micah has given that this wonderful thing is actually going to take place, that this world is going to become so separate from war, that there will be a complete freedom from external danger. War will be entirely removed."

And so we have this parallel, I believe here, and then I believe we have one more parallel. That one more parallel I call E- "Micah 4:5 and Isaiah 2:5." I think we have a lot of ground to cover this semester, so I won't spend much time on it, particularly as the real problem in this comparison lies in Micah instead of Isaiah. But most Bibles, like the one that I have copied this from, (and the reason I use that one is it has the largest type of any Bible I was able to lay hands on and that I could get the page to lie flat enough to make it transparency for you, and for that reason I use this one. That said,) you notice the heading of this passage, "the Lord Judges the crowd," "Oh House of Jacob, Oh House of Jacob, Come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord therefore thou has forsaken thy people the House of Jacob." What sense does that make? Putting Verse 5 and Verse 6 together like that, in my opinion, makes absolutely no sense. That is not a reason why God has forsaken these people, because they want to walk in the way of the Lord. That is Isaiah's conclusion to the wonderful picture. God is able to promise this tremendous thing, this thing you couldn't believe if Isaiah didn't say "God has revealed this to me, as he revealed it to Micah so you can know better that it will come to pass. Therefore, oh House of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." That's wonderful; God's going to do bring peace in Isaiah's future, but what does it mean to us? We who believe in a God who could do this wonderful

thing. We should walk in the Light of the Lord. We should follow as He leads. And we should make our life count for Him.

Now, as a slight digression, I think it is utterly wasteful when a man takes a Biblical teaching, no matter how wonderful it is, and simply presents it to a congregation without application. Here's something interesting for you to know. God's going to do this, or this is going to happen. It's good to know, but we should draw it to our purpose. In view of what God's going to do, let us walk in the light of the Lord. And that's what Isaiah does here, and I think it's very sad that many Bibles put in a division at that point where there certainly does not belong one. And you notice that the passage in Micah ends with a word in verse 5, "For the people will walk everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." And that used to puzzle me greatly because it sounds as if all the heathens are going to keep on worshipping their heathen god forever and ever. But the trouble is that the Hebrew imperfect verb tense can just as well be translated as a frequentative, or it can be translated as an exhortation, not in all cases, but in many. But in any case it can be translated as a frequentative. And most of the modern translations render it that way. "For the people walk everyone in the name of their God."

This is a fact that if you will go to most any part of the world where people are worshipping false gods, you will find that they have no shame about doing so. I was on a train in Egypt, and it came time for evening prayer, and the men, dozens of them, got out in the aisle in the train and bowed down toward Mecca, and nobody thought of being ashamed of it. The only religion that I've ever heard that people feel any shame about is Christianity. And people are afraid to say grace often in a public place for fear someone will think they are pious or they won't make a testimony to the Lord when there is a marvelous opportunity for it. They are afraid people will look down on them. Muslims don't feel that way; they're proud of their belief in Allah. The worshipers of Buddha, the followers of Confucius, the Brahmins aren't ashamed. The difference, of course, is that

Christianity requires a standard of life that most of us find hard to live up to. And consequently, those who don't want to follow this standard have managed, in many Christian areas, to get an attitude in which people cover up the fact that they believe in Christ instead of being proud of the fact. And Isaiah says these heathen people, who believe in these gods, they direct their lives in accordance with the teachings of their gods they worship. They do it publicly and they think nothing of it. Shall not we who have a God who can make such a prediction as this, shall not we who have a God who can do these wonderful things. Shall not we walk in his name for ever and ever?

I believe we have covered most of what is necessary at this point about Isaiah 2:1-5 so we can go on to chapter 4. And I don't want to show you the whole passage on the overhead because I don't want you copying it until we discuss it more. But chapter 2, verse 6, to chapter 4, verse 1, is made up of rebuke for Israel's sins. And this is one of the characteristics of the prophets that I find most useful in studying them. That is to note what is the purpose of a passage: is it a rebuke, a passage dealing with sin; or is it a blessing passage, comforting those who wish to be true to the Lord. Most passages in the prophets can be put under one of these two headings. And I find it a very useful first step in interpretation to ask that question about every passage.

And so here it is true of the rest of chapter 2, certainly at verse 6, a new chapter should have begun. If chapter 4 can be made up of five verses, certainly there is no reason why chapter 2 could not have been made up of 5 verses. We have a complete change of thought at verse 6, so I don't know why they translated the beginning of verse 6 as, "therefore thou hast forsaken thy people." The Hebrew word there is a word that is ordinarily translated "for" and I guess that the translators of the King James Version thought it ridiculous to say, "let us follow the Lord for thou hast forsaken thy people," and they thought it sounded a little less ridiculous to say, "therefore thou has forsaken thy people," but there are a few cases where there is no question that the Hebrew word "for" refers to what follows

rather than what precedes, but there are a few places where it seems simply to be an assertion of the certainty of what has been said. And so I would rather translate this, “sure, or surely thou hast forsaken thy people,” or “indeed thou hast forsaken thy people.” I think “for” goes with what follows than with what precedes in the sense that God is going to send punishment because of what preceded.

But at any rate it is definitely a new section. We have had this section of rebuke through most of chapter 1, but then this marvelous picture of blessings and comfort for God's people at the end of chapter 1 followed by this marvelous picture in the beginning of chapter 2. Now we start a new part of the book, and this part begins with capital A. “Its idolatry and heathenism.” In chapter 2, verses 6 to 9, God rebukes Judah for turning to the gods of the east, and for looking to them that claim to predict the future by their false methods.

And that is just as appropriate today as it ever was with the way that people today are turning for the gods of the east. My wife and I less than a week ago were standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, and a man came up to us and began to talk in a very attractive pleasant manner. In fact, my wife at first thought he was connected with some Christian group, but then when we questioned him, we found that he was trying to get people to give money to advance the worship of Krishna, the Hindu god. The religions of the east are coming in like a flood into our country now; astrology is widely being followed, and all of these cults and “isms” and false ideas, and God rebukes the Israelites in verses 6-9 for the way they allow these things to come, are coming into our nation.

On account of the way the time is going, I won't read the rest of the verses, or even the verses in part B, which is a much larger section from chapter 2:10 to 3:9. This is one whole section which is interrupted by a chapter division which should not have been placed there. It should have been at the end of verse 5 in chapter 2, but there is no reason for one at the beginning of chapter 3. There is

hardly a paragraph division there at the beginning of chapters, for the theme of the certainty of punishment continues beyond 3:1.

There are verses there that would be well worth our time but I think we will move on and look at capital C, "A conditional prediction," which is in chapter 3 verses 10-11. And I am going to take a second on that because there is something there that you find quite frequently in the prophetic books. At various places you find something like this: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him for they shall eat the fruit of their doing; but woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him for the reward of his hands shall be given him." In other words, we have here two conditional predictions. It does not say that either of these things is going to happen: that it is going to be well with the people, or that they are going to suffer terrible punishment. Rather, it says that the result depends on the decision that they make. And I believe thoroughly in the sovereignty of God, that God controls all things, that everything is in line with his glorious plan, but I believe that people can easily take that wonderful doctrine and make it into something that gives them an idea of life as if it were like a moving picture, that you look at and you see it running before you and people look as if they are surprised, they're terrified, they weep, they laugh. And yet you know what's going to happen right in the next minute. It's all there, it's pure play-acting, there's no reality to it. Life is real and what we do matters, and over and over in the Scriptures God says that what we do matters. And we cannot understand exactly how we fit together with the fact that God controls all things. What we do, what we think, what we say, what we decide, matters to God. And so at many places in the prophetic books you have these conditional predictions. God knows what decisions are going to be made. God knows what is going to happen, God knows how his wonderful plan is going to work out and yet what we decide and what we do matters.

And then capital D is "Judgment on unworthy leaders." Chapter 3 verses 12-15 deal with the unworthy leaders and tell how God is going to enter into judgment with them and rebukes them for their sin. And then section E is

“Rebuke of the vain and worldly women,” Chapter 3:16-4:1. Here he turns to those daughters of Zion who are haughty and rough with stretchforthed necks and wanton eyes and all their interests in their adornment and in the beautiful things they had, and all that, and he describes it in detail and says that all this beauty is going to be burnt to ash. He does not criticize them for wanting to look attractive. He does not criticize them for giving reasonable attention to making the world a more pleasant place to live in by dressing themselves as attractively and pleasantly as they can. But he rebukes them for making this their end in life, and the thing from which they get their joy and their pleasure. And he rebukes them for it and tells them how they are going to be punished for it. "They are going to have instead of a sash, a torn rag; instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a cape, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit on the ground. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, 'we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel and let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.'"

I was in Germany in the years after the first world war. And I felt great sympathy for a whole generation of young women, women, say, in their thirties and forties, who were left with there being, say, three women to one man. Of that particular age group most definitely. Now, of course, the older people were still living, both sexes, the young children were living both sexes. But in that particular age group there was that disproportion which leads to all sorts of evils in society. And Isaiah predicts here to the Israelites that there will come war and difficulty in which the men will fall in the war and this disproportion will be introduced. Now if the women's libers succeed in their ideal of making women and men absolutely indistinguishable, we will not have that particular evil in the next war because there will be just as many women as men in combat, but whether they will succeed or not, nobody can tell at this time.

But verse one of chapter 3 very clearly belongs with the preceding verse, and yet the chapter division breaks the continuous thought between the end of chapter 3 and the first verse of chapter 4. Now there are those who say these seven women represent the seven churches of Asia and these seven churches have shown their love for the Lord saying, "we will depart from all others, only let us be called by your name." But that sort of a metaphorical interpretation can prove anything and this verse is clearly not amenable to this interpretation. This all to say the archbishop put the chapter division in what is clearly the wrong place.

I was hoping to get to chapter four today, so we are behind, but next week I'll hopefully finish that and glance at chapter five.

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