

Allan MacRae: Isaiah 1-6: Lecture 11

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Last time we ended with our discussion of the "Servant" that Isaiah describes in chapter 42. We then moved onto chapter 49 when we continue Isaiah's description of the "servant." Now, verse 3 of Isaiah chapter 49 has a new idea we did not have in chapter 42 at all. The chapter shows that the servant must accomplish a work for Israel as well as for other nations. Note verses 49:5-6, "And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth." The Servant must do a work for Israel as well as for the sins of other nations. So here we have clear evidence that the servant of the Lord is separate from Israel as a whole. So what appeared to be unclear in chapter 42--whether the "servant" was distinct from Israel--is made clear in chapter 49: The "servant" is distinct from Israel for the Servant is to bring Israel back to the Lord! Hence, the Servant here cannot be Israel. Moving onto Isaiah 49:4 we read "Though Israel be not gathered." Many translations, most of the recent translations, will say that verse 5 of chapter 49 reads, "in order that Israel is gathered," whereas the KJV reads: "though Israel is not gathered." It is hard for a layman who does not know the Hebrew language to understand why we have this difference in. As a matter of fact, the difference between those two translations is a difference of one letter in Hebrew. Some manuscripts have one version and some have the other. And either way you take it, it is still definitely taught that the servant has a responsibility toward Israel as well as toward the whole world.

Now number 4 of the outline: "This chapter distinguishes the servant from Israel, as we already brought out."

Number 5: "The chapter shows that the servant, like Israel, must suffer humiliation." This is suggested in verse seven. "Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth," not the "nations", but the "nation." What nation abhors the Holy One? The word "nation" is usually used to suggest, or to refer to, foreign nations. But there are cases where it is used of Israel. So the main one who is the Holy One is going to be despised by the people. It seems to me here that for redemption the servant must suffer humiliation like Israel. And this thought is further developed in chapter 42 and 53:4-11. We will not take time to look at these passages. There are some points there that require consideration in detail, and that is not part of our purpose this semester, but it is good to have in your notes the reference here.

Now capital D: "Fulfillment of the servant's work" The Servant's work has captured the ideals that God says must be done, and will be done as described in chapter 48. It is clearly brought out that Israel has responsibility to carry out God's ideals. Israel has responsibility, but as chapter 49 brings out, the one who accomplishes it can be distinguished from Israel as a whole. This one has work to do for Israel, as well as for the temple, work that Israel as a whole could not do.

Now we get further detail about the servant's work with the assurances he will succeed. In chapter 52 verse 13 to 53 verse 12, we have one of the great chapters of the Scriptures. It should start in 52 verse 13. It is a great chapter of the description of the work of Christ. That which is so important in bringing light to the nations, that which is the very foundation upon which justice is to be brought to the whole world, is described here. That is described in this section, beginning in chapter 52 verse 13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently." The word here for "prudently" is the Hebrew word that you cannot translate exactly into English. It also means "to act wisely"; it also means "to be successful." It

usually means to be successful because you do that which brings success. Now I don't know which of these two ideas is meant. Sometimes it is often translated "to be successful," and it is often translated "to act wisely." And this shows what the servant is going to accomplish. We don't have time to go into the details of this passage outside this section. I am simply looking at the background for what follows.

But the essential, outstanding idea in this chapter is the "vicarious atonement." And we find that already in verse 15, "so shall he sprinkle many nations." The Old Testament tells how in the temple the priests must sprinkle blood, or oil, or water on the altar and upon the furnishings in the temple. It is the purification usually for the sacrifice. No modernist can understand how this can make any sense whatever. So if we take up the Revised Standard Version we will find it says, "So shall he startle many nations," and there is a footnote where it says "the Hebrew is obscure"

Well, there is nothing obscure about the Hebrew. This word occurs either 22 or 23 times in the Old Testament. In every case except this and one other the Revised Standard Version translates the word "sprinkled." In at least 20 cases, and the one case besides this one, the Revised Standard Version does not translate it "sprinkled;" it is translates it "spattered," which is really the same thing. And so in say 22 out of 23 cases they translate it either "sprinkled" or "spattered." Yet in this one they say, "Hebrew is obscure." It is obscure because they do not believe in expiatory sacrifice, and because they don't understand the Hebrew language.

They can't understand it, but you know Peter could. Peter had no difficulty with this one. If you look at 1 Peter 1:1, the beginning of it, you will find that Peter writes to many nations. Peter says in verse 1. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," He writes to many nations. And what does he say about these many nations? He says, "They are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the

blood of Jesus Christ.” Peter certainly never would have said that he did not have this verse in his mind. He says here is the fulfillment of what Isaiah predicted: that through the servant of the Lord, many nations will be sprinkled. Well, that is what modernists cannot believe: the vicarious atonement. So they try to get rid of this verse. But they can’t get rid of it in chapter 53. The idea of atonement is expressed four times. “But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Four times vicarious atonement is expressed in that one verse. It is again in verse 6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Atonement is expressed in verse 10 where it says, “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” It is expressed in verse 11: “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” And it is expressed again in verse 12. And so fulfillment of the servant’s work, which is described so clearly in these verses, has a great stress on the vicarious atonement, which is the foundation by means of which that light will be brought to all the nations and by means of which the foundation will be laid that eventually he will establish justice throughout the earth. Now this word “servant” is never again used in the singular in Isaiah. Not once more in the remaining, oh, 10 chapters of the book is the word used in the singular. But the word “servants” is used. The word “servants” is used twice in the next couple of chapters. And then toward the end of the book "servants" is used quite a number of times. And it is reasonable to interpret “servants” as meaning those who are the followers of the Servant, those who are the recipients of the word. Those who are saved through what Jesus did on the cross. The servants are those who are his representatives in carrying Jesus' message. They are the “servants of the Lord”. And so in the next chapter 54:17 he says in the end of the last verse: “This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the

LORD.” They are righteous, not because they work hard to do good works, but because God imputes righteousness to them because of what Jesus had done on the cross.

And Then in chapter 55 verse 1, we have as wonderful a gospel call as is anywhere in Scripture. “Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, without money and without price.” And go on through chapter 55 and it refers to that which will come to David’s greater son, which is the marvelous blessing, which has simply to be taken by faith. You don’t have to pay for it because Christ has paid it all for us.

And this section of the book of Isaiah continues with chapter 56, verses 4-8, which show the word going out to all the world. So that as verse 7 says: “He will bring them to his house of prayer, and my house shall be called a house of prayer to all people.” And verse 8 ends that major section of the book. And the section we are now going to look at is starts with verse 9, and I’ve already had you divide that section into blessing and rebuke. We had no such section to speak of just before, which is the great teaching of the servant. But now it becomes more like the first part, and we will go on from there next time.