

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 1-6: Lecture 13

Biblical Theological Seminary, 1976

I'd like to mention the assignment; I thought of writing it out but I don't think it's necessary. It's not very complicated, though it may sound so. It deals with a prayer. This prayer ends at the end of Isaiah 64. It includes at least five verses of the previous chapter, 63. So long as you include at least five verses of the previous chapter, I don't care whether you go further back or not, but I want you to answer three questions. Number one, what is the purpose of the prayer? That is, what is petition being made for? What are they asking? So what is the purpose of the prayer is number one. Number two, on what grounds is this petition being made? What are the reasons? Suppose you ask your father to give you an auto for Christmas, and you say reason number one is "you're my father and you owe it to me." Number two, "I've been a good boy all year." Number three, "I promise not to get into any accidents with it." Now, what are the reasons for the petition that is made in Isaiah? What grounds are given? And number three, what evidence is there in the prayer of sincere repentance and determination to turn away from sin? I repeat, what evidence is there in the prayer of sincere repentance and determination to turn away from sin? Now a person might conceivably spend several hours on this, but there's no need of it. Try to answer the first question in one sentence. I would like you to spend an hour reviewing the material we've covered in class. So, I do not intend the assignment necessarily to

take more than an hour. If you spend an hour on it, I will be satisfied, but if you feel like spending more, that's up to you. You notice I'm not asking you to do any commentary work on this, I'm asking you to read it for yourself and get the answers to these questions. Of course if you want to consult a commentary for any particular verse or anything, I have no objections.

It is quite obvious as you look at the latter part of chapter 64 that it is a prayer that is being given. This prayer starts at least five verses before the beginning of chapter 64; that is, chapter 63:15-19. Now, you may think it starts further back than that. I don't care whether you think so or not. I want whatever you think is the prayer. I think it includes at least all of 64 and the five verses immediately preceding. That is a prayer to the Lord. What are they asking for? On what grounds are they asking for it? And what are the evidences of sincere repentance and determination to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Lord in the future?

Now, I had a question turned in to me last time at the end of the hour. Just what is meant by the "watchmen" in the passage we were just speaking of in chapter 56, starting at verse 9? This was capital A under 11 in the outline, "Rebuke against the watchmen and the leaders of the people." The term "watchmen" as used here in the context means those who have responsibility, not only for themselves, but for others. Naturally, the leaders of the people, the priests, the prophets, the kings, the rulers, they were watchmen in a very special sense because they were appointed to watch over the well-being of the nation, and

so they are the ones here who are called the “watchmen”. The message has equal importance for us today because today, because we trust that all of you will someday be in a position where you are expected to be watching over the welfare of the people in your congregation or in the group to which you minister. You will be a watchman for them to show them how to avoid evil, to guide them away from that which would destroy their lives, and to lead them toward the Lord. But there is a sense in which every Christian is a watchman, because God has not given the oversight of Christians only to those who were set apart for this, for everyone of us has a duty, regardless of how he earns his living. If he’s a true Christian, he has a duty to try to lead other people into the fold of Christ and a duty to help others. And so this rebuke against the watchmen and the leaders of the people, which runs from 56:9 to 57:13, deals particularly with the leaders but has a relevancy to all.

We are now dealing with Roman numeral eleven, a succession of passages of rebuke and blessing. You find such successions like this moving from rebuke to blessing in most of the prophets. You find it in earlier parts of Isaiah but not in the section after chapter forty until you get to here. You find very little rebuke in that section where he is comforting the exiles, promising them that he will bring them safely back to the land of Israel, and showing how the cure for exile must be more than just bringing them back. They need to have the sin problem dealt with and the servant of the Lord is to be sent to bear on the cross the sins of all who will believe on his name.

So we have a difference now after the beginning of this section, 56:9; quite a marked difference, in fact, from what immediately preceded it. And as I mentioned last time, this has a greater similarity to earlier portions of Isaiah, and yet you will probably notice, as I have numbered number two on the board, that future emphasis continues at least to some extent. That is, Isaiah is speaking to his own people in his own time, but not exclusively to them. It may even be that God particularly has in mind these people after the exile, when they return to their land, and when there is a tendency after a time to become careless and selfish. And so he speaks here in these verses about the watchmen. He reproves them for being slothful. In verses one and two of chapter 57, he reproves them for being selfish. In verses three and four he reproves them for being sensuous. In verses four to nine he points to the terrible danger of idolatry again; they're falling into putting other things ahead of the Lord. In verse ten he speaks of the fact that their failure as watchmen results in their becoming wearied, becoming unhappy; and yet they are not turning to the Lord for the help that he is ready to give them. And he stresses how they turn to human resources instead of to God.

Our tendency is to put all our emphasis on the wonderful blessings through Christ that are available and certainly that should be our main emphasis. But there also is needed an emphasis on the nature of sin. That is needed, and these Old Testament passages have great relevancy to our own day, even though addressed originally to the people of Israel. There's much in this section that we could look

at length, but there are other matters later on in Isaiah that I must get through this semester.

So I'm going to hurry through this section and call your attention to the fact that the transition from this section to the next comes in the middle of a verse; It is in verse thirteen. In verse thirteen we read, "When thou criest let thy company deliver thee. But the wind shall carry them away; vanity shall take them." That is an important part of the rebuke. Their own resources will be insufficient for their protection. But the last half of the verse says, "but he that puts his trust in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain and shall say 'cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people'." So, from there on, for a section, he is dealing with blessing to those true to him. And so verse thirteen might seem to flow smoothly at first with part of the same idea as in the previous verses, but there is a change in the middle that runs through several subsequent verses. And these changes, thus, seem, in this section, quite gradual, and yet actually they're rather sudden, and they often come in the middle of a verse. There'll be several verses before you that are rebuke and several verses after that are blessings.

Now, there are various ways in which one may attempt to divide up the Scripture. We have to see what ways will work out in particular patterns and I have found that in prophetic scriptures, in many places, the easiest division is between passages of rebuke and passages of blessing. I have found this often very helpful in seeing the changes in the general approach that the prophet takes. Here,

in 57:13 he turns his attention away: his attention has been for about twenty verses on the watchmen and the leaders who were unfaithful to God. Now he turns it away to the men of faith and so he gives blessings to the men of faith in the next few verses, 57:13b to 19. There he speaks about, in contrast, the situation of those who do not follow the Lord truly.

These who do follow the Lord are described in the beginning of verse 13 as the ones who put their trust in God and who say, “cast up, cast up, prepare the way”. Now this word, “cast up” doesn’t make much sense to us today, we would say, “build up”. In making a road, the usual way was to take dirt and rocks and put them down and smooth them off until the road was built up higher than what was around. The road must actually be higher than what was around because otherwise the water would run into it and would soon wreck it. And so this term was used, was definitely used in old English, “cast up”, in casting up the materials to build a road. It is used of building roads and building highways. And these are the people who are preparing the way for others to go in accordance with God’s desire, and the road builders are taking stumbling blocks out of their way.

And so the Lord gives them these wonderful promises. He says in 57:15, “I dwell in the high and holy place and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit”. And verse 16, “I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry, for the spirit would fail before me and the souls which I have made”. The Lord recognizes that these who are faithful are not perfect by any means. They are people who are trying to serve Him, trying to seek His way, trying to find the true

meaning of what Isaiah has given about the Servant of the Lord and how He will give Himself as a ransom for many; and he says, “The spirit would fail before me if you were to try to find salvation by your works of righteousness”. It is impossible. But those who are contrite and humble and try to follow the Lord and put their faith in the redemption that He provides, He says that these He will revive and He will help.

Now, in verse 17 he points back to their sin; but back to it, not to rebuke them, but to show how He has brought them out of it. “For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and smote him. I hid and was angry, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart”. Good old English word “frowardly.” I’m not sure what it does mean in modern English [note: It means "disobediently"]. But it’s one of those words that has disappeared from our language, which I don’t think will do a fraction of the harm that the words that have changed their meaning do. You strike a word "frowardly," or the words of that type, and you don’t know what that means, it’s just blank. But when you strike a word that we use today, like, when you say, “take no thought for the morrow”. Of course, that’s absurd, “take no thought for the morrow.” The Lord definitely wants us to take thought, but what He means is do not take an anxious thought. It means, "don’t be upset about tomorrow." He certainly wants us to plan. So, it’s these words that are changed a little in their meaning that are the main reason why we need the Bible in our own language today. Here's another example: "I do you to wit"; nobody would have any idea in the world what that meant today if they did not go on to read the

context. By the way, "I do you to wit," means, "I would like you to know." But getting back to our discussion, this section goes through verse 18 and I wish the archbishop had made the end of the chapter at the end of verse 18 instead of verse 21.

Verse 18 reads, "I have seen his ways and will heal him. I will lead him also and restore comfort unto him and his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips, peace peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him." This is our first alternation. In this passage we see the change from rebuke to blessing.

Then we go on to the next part of the outline, C: "Rebuke against wickedness and especially against insincere formalism." This is 57:20 to 58:5. Again, we have a connection between the last word of this chapter 57, and the first of the next, 58. This is telling how God brings peace to those who are distant and to those who are near, but who put their trust in the Servant of the Lord and look to him for redemption.

He says, "I will heal him," but in contrast, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and house of Jacob their sin."

This phrase, "there is no peace says my God to the wicked," occurs at the end of two chapters, namely, here in chapter 57 and at the end of chapter 48. That is the way the arch bishop divided the chapters, and some people say the last part

of Isaiah can be divided into three parts because two chapters end with this particular verse and the book, as a whole, ends with reference to God's punishment of the wicked. Mere similarity in words, however, is not the way to divide a literary work and to see what its natural divisions are. We must go by the thought and not simply by the repetition of the words.

Very often a writer will use a repetition of words to show a division. I believe Micah starts each of his three main divisions with the words, "Hear ye," and he put that in to note and to call attention to the divisions. A writer might conceivably, as has been suggested, put a verse at the end of each section that is similar to show that this is the end. He might; however, I don't believe it is nearly so likely; but in either case, it is the content, not a superficial designation of similar words that we should use. If the context really shows the proper division, then it is interesting to see if the writer has put in an indication. In this case in chapter 57, he has not, but he continues right on from speaking of the peace God gives to the righteous to turning to the wicked and starting the second of these alternations: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. Cry aloud spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sin." And so this runs through the fifth verse of the next chapter. Notice how I have combined the last verse in chapter 57 and the first verse in chapter 58, for I believe they form one unit and should not be divided by the chapter. And immediately we find here, as I have noted in the

outline, “insincere formalism.” “The people”, he says in verse two, “they seek me daily; they delight to know my ways.” He doesn’t mean they really delight to follow the Lord. It is obvious in the context that he means they are using all the formalism of being his people, for Isaiah continues in verse 2, “as if they were like a nation that did righteousness and didn’t forsake the ordinance of their God; as if they ask of me the ordinance of justice, they take delight in God.” They take all the forms of religion. And then they say in verse three: “Why have we fasted,” they say, “and you don’t see it? Why don’t you pay attention?” And the Lord’s answer is: “Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate and to smite with the fist of the wicked. You shall not fast as you do this day to make your voice to be heard on high.” So here they are fasting in order to observe outwardly the ordinances the Lord gives. They are as Christ preached about the Pharisees, praying in the street corners. They are showing how pious they are but actually in their lives, they are not at all. Jesus said, “when you fast, go into your chamber and when you pray do it secretly before God, and God who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Here Isaiah says, “Is it such a fast I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? And so we have God’s rebuke against wickedness and especially against insincere formalism. But now He turns to his blessing on sincere believers in verses 58:6 to 59:1. Again, the chapter divisions were not so well put in. And again, the transition is very gentle,

so you hardly notice it unless you have in mind this alternation that keeps taking place.

So let's move on to His blessing on sincere believers from 58:6 to 59:1. Here He shows how true devotion to God requires honesty and compassion. In verses 6 and 7 we read, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen, to loosen the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burden, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and bring the poor, that are cast out, into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" Here is the kind of fast He desires: the kind of fast that shows itself as true humanitarian and Christian activity. And he continues in verse 8, "Then shall your light break forth as the morning and your health will spring forth speedily." This word "health" is a good example of what I would say is a slight change in meaning between how the word was used in the KJV and now. Today, when we say "health," we mean the condition you are in. But in the old English health could include the idea of the change from poor health to good health. So in modern English "healing" is a more accurate translation, and the verse would read, "your healing will spring forth speedily and your righteousness will go before you. The glory of the Lord will be" as the KJV says, "your rereward," spelled REREWARD, which makes it look like "re-reward." This old English word "rereward" is very puzzling to the average reader of the scripture. We spell "rear," R E A R, but in old English it was spelled R E R E. So what the verse says is, "The glory of the Lord will be your 'rear-ward,' or 'rear guard.'" He

continues in verse 9, "then you will call and the Lord will answer. And you will cry and He will say, 'here I am.'" If you turn away from these various wicked things he mentions and draw your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your life will rise in a pure light and darkness will be like the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually. Wonderful blessings here are given to those who sincerely try to follow the Lord. These blessings are offered to the people in Isaiah day, but they are blessings that would be very, very appropriate for the people after they return from exile, and blessings that any believer in the Lord has the right to appropriate to himself, and to know that God will bring him wonderful things in his life.

Jumping to verse 13, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath from doing your pleasure on my holy day and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, then you will take delight in the Lord, etc." God made us in such a way that we need one day of rest in seven. And there are many a ministers that break the Sabbath by working harder on Sunday than on any other day and then working equally hard through the remaining six days of the week. A minister cannot take his day of rest as Sunday, which is the busiest day, but he should take another day of rest. And many ministers take Monday as their day to get rest, except for matters of emergency, and to get completely away from their regular work. And if they do, they live longer and accomplish more in the end. God has made us this way that we need just one day of rest in seven. And of course, he wants all our life to take the Sabbath in the sense that all of our life we devote to

Him, but it is good to take a certain special time that we devote particularly to serving him. And there are these two features on the Sabbath: There is service, and there is the rest that everyone needs and that God intends us to have.

Continuing in verse 13 He says, "If you honor him, not giving into your own ways, nor finding your own places, nor speaking your own words, then you will delight yourself in the Lord and He will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that He cannot save you, nor His ear heavy that he cannot hear." This section of blessing includes the first verse of chapter fifty nine. But again, the transition from this context of blessing to the next section of rebuke comes gradually.

Here we read that the Lord's hand is not shortened nor His ear so heavy that he can't hear, but as it says in 59:2, "your inequities have separated you and your God." So we have the start the next section, which is a picture of rebuke that I have called, "a picture of a transgressor," because it is not so much directly rebuking as it is describing, but the impact of it is just the same. We can naturally divide this section of chapter 59:2-15: The first part of it is inequity described in verses two to 8c. That is, "Your inequities have separated you from your God." He goes on, "none calls for justice, they weave the spiders' webs, ... they cover themselves with their work, their works of worth are iniquity; their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed innocent blood." He continues through verse eight, "the way of peace they do not know. There's no judgment in their ways, they have

made them crooked paths.” Up to this point he has been describing the inequity of those who have turned away from the Lord. But then the last fourth of this eighth verse begins to speak of the result. “Whoever goes in these paths, these crooked paths that the wicked make shall not know peace. Therefore his judgment is far from us neither does judgment overtake us. We wait for light but behold obscurity.” Then he describes the result, largely in the first person. Here their transgression from verse 8b to 15a. “Our transgressions are multiplied, our sins testify against us our transgressions are before us in transgressing and lying against the Lord. Departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt; and judgment is turned away backwards, and justice stands far off. For truth has fallen in the street and equity cannot enter. Yet, truth fails and he that departs from evil makes himself afraid.”

Now the first half of verse fifteen definitely is, in this picture of the transgressor, giving the result of the transgression. As to whether the division should be made in the middle of verse fifteen or at the end of the verse, one may argue. I don't think it is tremendously important. I have made it here at the beginning.

We go on there to the next point: “A long picture of future divine activity.” Here we have had rebuke for about twenty verses, then blessing of about fifteen verses, and then rebuke for about 10 or 15 verses, and then blessing for a few verses, and then here rebuke for about fifteen verses. Now we have a section that can be considered as the sixth of these alternations, but that runs much longer than

any of the others. I have called it "a long picture of divine activity" and it starts at 59:15b. Now, someone might argue against starting here, but wherever one starts, the section runs from there, I believe, to 63:6. This is a long picture of future divine activity and completes this triple cycle of alternation. I was going to put this section under Roman numeral 11, but I thought it wise to give it a section to itself. And so I'm making it Roman numeral 12: "The long picture of divine activity: Isaiah 59:15b thru 63:6." And under that, capital "A" is "God's sovereign interposition to overthrow His adversaries." I gave you an assignment a couple of weeks ago in which I gave you a sheet of paper with a passage from Isaiah 59 on one side of the page and a passage from Isaiah 62 to 63 on the other side, and asked you to note parallels. And I believe you all noticed that the last two verses in what I had on one side of the page was very close to the two verses rather near the beginning on the other side. You also noticed that there was a large group of statements that were, say, toward the bottom part of the first side that correspond to the first part of the other side. I believe all the papers noticed that. Some noticed many similarities, some noticed few.

Well, I took the passage from 59:15b-19a, which was on the first page, and I wrote those verses, in order, on the left side of the sheet and after each verse I put the parallel verses from the other side correlating both sides except that from 59:15b, which might be considered an introduction to this section; and that's why I say before that if you want to consider 59:15b as part of the previous section, I certainly have no objection. But I don't know anywhere in Scripture where you

would have within a few chapters, two passages that are quite as similar as these are. And so I gave you that assignment in order that you might see the very remarkable similarity between two passages, which are quite extraordinary passages. There's very little that really is quite as identical with either of these passages anywhere in Scripture, but they are very, very close to one another. And last week I mentioned in the class that I had typed these passages up, and had them copied, and that they were here on my desk and you could take copies at the end of the hour. I want to look at these sheets with you now, but I'd like you to have them in front of you as we look at these two passages, which have this very remarkable similarity. And I think that the content can be pretty well summarized in the title I gave it, "God's Sovereign interposition to overthrow His adversaries."

Now it seems to me that the last two clauses in verse 15c and d serve as an introduction to the whole of what follows. But you might find parallels between this and some of the other verses, but I put these two clauses alone at the top. They read, "And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." Continuing in 16a we have this statement, "and he saw there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor." Proceeding to chapter 63 verses 3a and b we read, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with me." Certainly this is a striking similarity and 63:5a "I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered and there was none to uphold."

Then going right back to chapter 59 verse 1b, c, which I have starting on the left side of the page, "therefore his arm brought salvation unto him." Then back to chapter 63, the big difference is that in chapter 63 the first person is used instead of the third person as in chapter 59. In 63:1 he says, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." That is even closer to 63:5c, "therefore mine own arm brought salvation," and this is almost identical to 59:16, "therefore his arm brought salvation." And then the next part of verse 16 in chapter 59, that His righteousness sustains him, parallels 63:1, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Then 59:17 we read, "then he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head, and the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clad with zeal as a cloke." And this emphasis on clothing parallels very closely with the beginning of chapter 63.

To wit: "Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bosrah? Who is this robed in splendor, and traveling in the greatness of his strength"? And then verse 2, "wherefore are you red in your apparel and garments like him who treadeth in the winepress?" And also verses 3 and 4, "and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiments, for the day of vengeance is in my heart".

Back to 59:18 we read, "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay. Fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies, to the islands he will pay recompense." The parallel in 63:3 is, "For I will tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury, and their blood will be sprinkled on my garments." A

further parallel is 63:5, "I will tread down the people in my anger and make them drunk in my fury and bring down their strength to the earth."

Then 59:19a, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun." This last verse, some say, perhaps parallels 63: 1a, which says, "Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bosrah." Some see a parallel in these verses because Edom and Bosrah, a city of Edom, are to the east of Israel where the sun comes up. So we have this passage of Isaiah 63, which in the Encyclopedia Biblica describes as "a very beautiful but aesthetically disgusting picture," or something like that. This modernistic author thinks this scene violent, as he calls it. But it is very striking to find in chapter 59 declaring how the Lord is going to come in vengeance and in chapter 63 giving a picturesque image of how he is coming. The ideas of both passages are so closely parallel. And that being the case, it seems to me that it provides strong evidence for considering that these passages form one unit of a long picture of divine activity beginning and ending with this almost identical activity of God's sovereign interposition to overthrow his adversaries.

Then it is very interesting to note that in chapter 59 verse 20, this is immediately followed by the declaration that "a redeemer comes to Zion." And that chapter 63 is immediately preceded by the statement in 62:11 that "salvation comes to Zion." Thus you have the beginning and ending of this long passage from chapter 59 to 63 being identical. And then you have just before one section and just after the other section the statement of two verses that again are almost

identical. "Salvation comes to Zion" is not quite as identical as the previous parallels perhaps, but very close to "a redeemer comes to Zion."

In chapter 59 I'm starting it with verse 19b. Here there might be an argument whether it should start with verse 20 or with 19b. I'll start with 20 right now. "'The Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,' says the Lord." And in chapter 62 the two verses just before that picture of judgment given in chapter 63, you have in verse 11 of chapter 62: "Behold the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, say to the daughter of Zion, 'behold your salvation cometh, behold his reward is with him and his work before him.'"

The term "daughter" is used in the Scripture as a common term for the people. "Daughter of Zion" is just like we say, "France is not happy, she should be better treated." Feminine pronouns in English are used for nations. The Bible often speaks of the "daughter of Zion" or the "daughter of Babylon," meaning the people of the town.

In 59:20 you have, "the redeemer comes to Zion," and the next verse, 59:21 continues, "'And as for me, this is my covenant with them,' says the Lord. 'My spirit that is on thee and my word which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed,' saith the Lord, 'from henceforth and forever.'" The verse corresponding to this in chapter 62 is verse 12, "and they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, and thou shall be called 'sought out,' a 'city not

forsaken." And you see the two verses 59:20 and 62:12 are very dissimilar in wording but very close in meaning. The continuing covenant that God will have with his people is seen in the phrase, "the redeemer comes to Zion" and the covenant continues because God will never go back on his promises that he has made.

Now the end of chapter 62 we read, "Go through, Go through the gate." that is verse 10a. It continues, "Prepare the way of the people. Cast up, Cast up the highway gather out the stone. Lift up a standard for the people." And that can be put right together with verse 11 that speaks of the coming of the redeemer who comes to Zion. And whether 59:19b is parallel to 62:11 may be a question raised particularly if you are using some modern version of the Bible. In the King James version, 59:19b says, "when the enemy will come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against it." There we have a standard lifted up, and the standard lifted up in 62:10 is, "lift up a standard for the people" I originally entitled this: "a banner is raised and a redeemer comes to Zion." I shortened the title and left out "the banner" because there are those who object to the King James translation of 59:19b. And I cannot complain about their objecting to it, but I will say that I believe this translation can be as well defended as any translation that has been subsequently made.

I will read you what the NIV says for it 59:19b: "For he will come like a pent up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along." Now if you have the King James Version in front of you, you might wonder how on earth could anyone

translate it so utterly differently. I think, if I recall correctly, the NASB takes a position about halfway in between the two. It translates it, "For he will come like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives." It's like the NIV. But it has a footnote opposite the word "rushing." It says "literally, narrow." "Like a narrow stream which the wind of the Lord drives." Now if you want to take either of these modern translations, there is not the same parallel between 59:19b and 62:11 as you find in the King James.

And when you see such a tremendous difference, a person naturally asks: "How can there be such a tremendous difference in the translation?" And the answer is that in every language there are words that are ambiguous. In English you look at the word "light." And you don't know whether it is the opposite of "dark" or the opposite "heavy." You have to guess it from context. And English is worse than any language I know of for having words that are ambiguous. So you have to get the translation from the context. Usually we have no difficulty getting it, but there are cases where you get two or three ambiguous words like that together and then you "are up against it" if there is no larger context that makes it clear. And in this particular verse we have a succession of such words. For instance "when the enemy shall come in like a flood." The Hebrew word "*sar*" is used a good many times for "enemy," but there is another word that looks exactly the same, which can mean "narrow." And so, "when he shall come in like a river, its either an enemy or narrow, which can be an adjective describing the river. Adjectives usually follow nouns in Hebrew. Even so, do we have "when he shall

come like a narrow river,” or “when an enemy shall come like a river?” Both translations are equally possible.

And then the word “Spirit.” Do we have the phrase, “the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a banner against him,” or the phrase, “which the wind of the Lord drives?” Now, the word “spirit” is used before the word “Lord” in the New Testament over and over, and this is the case in the Old Testament a good many times, as well. So it seems to me more reasonable to take this here as the “Spirit of the Lord” than the “wind of the Lord.” I think the RSV and modern translations translate it as a “mighty wind.” I do not quite see that “the wind of the Lord” has relevance in this particular passage. It is unfortunate that in Hebrew this same word can mean either “spirit” or “wind” or “breath.” And it is used a good many times for two of these meanings: either as “wind” or as “spirit.” It is translated as “spirit” 230 times in the Old Testament, “breath” 28 times, and “wind” 90 times. So you see that leaves you with a difficult choice to make. Now one place in the Old Testament where it says that, “The Lord will destroy antichrist with the breath of his mouth,” in the New Testament in the King James it says, “the Lord will destroy him [antichrist] with the spirit of his mouth” and you would think that breath would make more sense there. But in the New Testament the corresponding word “*pneuma*” is generally translated “spirit.” But there is one case where it is translated “life” and one case where it is translated “wind”. And it seems to me the “breath of the mouth” makes more sense than “spirit of the mouth” in this case. But you see you have that same ambiguity in this word in

both the Hebrew and in the Greek. But I am inclined to take 59:19c as the “spirit of the Lord” rather than “a mighty wind” in that case.

So there is this ambiguity here—yes, and we have one other ambiguity: the phrase “to lift up a banner.” The word for “banner” occurs only once in the Old Testament. The word “banner,” “*nays*,” is very common, and to make a verb from it would not be all that unusual in Hebrew. So it could well mean to “lift up the banner,” but there is another word “*noose*,” which is similar to “*nays*,” that means “to flee.” So where they say, “the wind of the Lord drives,” they are taking this word, which means “to flee,” which is used in the causative here, and can be translated, “which the wind of the Lord makes to flee.” Now, you usually speak of people fleeing; you do not speak of water fleeing as in the rushing of a stream. So it does not seem to be impossible to make the translation from “*noose*” (flee), but it seems more likely to come from “*nays*,” to lift. It is a word that occurs only once. And then when you notice this parallel in 62:11, there it seems to me an added argument for thinking the King James translation is right in this case.

But in either case, you have God’s sovereign interposition to overthrow his adversaries beginning this long picture and ending it. And the beginning is followed by the declaration of the redeemer coming to Zion, and at the end of the passage it is preceded by the account of a redeemer coming to Zion, whether there is a banner raised or not. We’ll have to stop now.

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