

The Prophets

Lesson #19

Isaiah 49:1-57:21

Outline

I. **Consolation (40:1-66:24)**

- A. The salvation of the Messiah (49:1-57:21).
 - 1. The Servant commissioned (49:1-26).
 - 2. The Servant contrasted with disobedient Israel (50:1-11).
 - 3. The remnant encouraged and exhorted (51:1-52:12).
 - 4. The suffering and triumph of the Servant (52:13-53:12).
 - 5. Salvation through the Servant (54:1-57:21).
 - a) The song of salvation (54:1-17).
 - b) The invitation of salvation (55:1-13).
 - c) Blessings extended to the Gentiles (56:1-8).
 - d) A rebuke to those who refuse salvation (56:9-57:21).

Notes

Isaiah 49:1-26

- Endowments for His work (49:1-4).
 - The Servant calls those who are afar off, the Gentiles, urging them to heed the message about to be announced. The womb is the spiritual remnant that returned from Babylon.
 - The Servant is the arrow by which God will penetrate the heart of His enemies, either bringing them under His dominion or spreading a judgment of death and destruction. In Him and His work, God's ideal will be achieved.
- The enlarged mission (49:5-7).
 - The Servant's sense of failure and disappointment at not reaching Jacob, His own people, is answered by assurance from the Lord to whom He belongs.
 - Scattered and fallen, Jacob and Israel needed to be raised up and restored. The Servant's enlarged mission is to become God's light and salvation to the Gentiles, even to the ends of the earth (cf. 42:1, 6).
- Salvation and succor (49:8-13).
 - In the day when God provides salvation for His people, He will come to the aid of His Servant. God will guard His life from danger until the appointed hour comes.
 - As the mountains are God's by creation, and hence subject to His will, He will be able to remove them, fill up the valleys and provide a way over which His redeemed people can travel (cf. 35:8; 40:4). The people from all parts of the earth will respond to the Servant's call.

- Zion's complaint and amazement (49:14-21).
 - Zion felt forsaken and forgotten of the Lord. It had suffered the pangs of loneliness. God's response to this cry is among the most tender expressions to be found in the Old Testament.
 - God pledges that the children shall return and that with them Zion shall beautify herself just as jewels enrich a bride's attire.
- God's assurance to Zion (49:22-26).
 - God will lift or wave His hand to point to the ensign; He will set up His ensign, a standard to indicate the rallying point to those who are at a distance (cf. 11:10, 12).
 - Fulfillment of the promise in vs. 25 is guaranteed by God's determination to deliver them. Anyone who would interfere would find himself at war with God.
 - In a gruesome picture God describes the consequence of contending with Him, oppressing the people or hindering the accomplishment of His purpose.
 - In the judgments brought upon them, they will destroy one another. The fulfillment of His purpose and the steadfastness of His word are incontrovertible evidence of His godhood and promises.

Isaiah 50:1-11

- A rebuke to the exiles (50:1-3).
 - Having addressed Zion as if she is a mother (49:14-22), God now addresses the exiles as if they are children. They alone were responsible and to blame for their enslavement.
 - Because they lack knowledge of God, they have no faith. By reason of the people's blindness, deafness and the hardening of their hearts (6:9-10; 42:18-20), there were none to answer.
- The Servant's message (50:4-9).
 - Repeatedly God says that He rises up early, sending His servants the prophets and speaking through them to the people; but they neither hear nor incline the ear to Him. The Servant is of no disposition to rebel, turn away, or back off from His mission.
 - The compulsive hatred of mankind for the teacher of truth and the willingness of the teacher to suffer for truth are vividly set forth in vs. 6. The Servant submitted to the ultimate outrage.
 - The Servant has violated neither God's former teaching in the law nor His own teaching; He has not mistreated any fellow man.
- Light for believers and sorrow for unbelievers (50:10-11).
 - The speaker addresses those who fear God and obey the voice of the Servant, who has spoken as a prophet of the Lord. To fear God is to hold Him in such holy reverence as to obey what He says.

- The speaker then addresses unbelievers, the disobedient people who reject the light revealed in the Servant and kindle their own fire. They will be brought to torment.

Isaiah 51:1-52:12

- An exhortation to the faithful (51:1-8).
 - In the midst of those who kindle a fire and walk therein to their own destruction, there is yet a faithful remnant, though they may be very few at times. If God could bring a nation from Abraham and Sarah, He could bring out a remnant.
 - Vs. 4 is definitely a Messianic prophecy to be fulfilled in the Servant; the law of justice here in view will go forth out of Zion under the Servant.
 - Only as the law abides in the heart, expressing itself through the will and actions, can one know righteousness. The end of the world of Judaism will occur. The old system will pass away.
- An appeal to God and His reply (51:9-16).
 - Time after time in ancient days God had come to rescue and deliver His people; the prophet pleads for a repeat of such action. Isaiah calls on the same power He had demonstrated in delivering Israel from Egypt.
 - Israel's fear of man is the consequence of their having forgotten God and His mighty power. God, who has all power, will care for Israel.
- The tragic plight of Jerusalem (51:17-20).
 - God will send the cup of His wrath to all the nations and force them to drink of it (Jeremiah 25:12-29).
 - Having drunk of this cup, Jerusalem staggers, stumbles and falls, for she has been forced to drain it even to the dregs, an indication of the completeness of her judgment. From all the sons of Jerusalem, there are none to guide to guide her back to a sober path. There is no one to comfort or feel sorry for them.
 - In vs. 20 the prophet presents a more graphic description of the cup of wrath that has left Jerusalem in ruins. They were like an antelope caught in a net.
- God's gracious promise (51:21-23).
 - The mother and her children are afflicted, suffering physical distress; Jerusalem is destroyed and her inhabitants exiled. They are drunken with God's cup of wrath.
 - God will now take the cup out of their hand; since the judgment for their former sins is complete. They shall drink of that cup no more. After they have drunk, the cup will be given to Babylon that she might drink (Jeremiah 25:26). There would be a day of reckoning for Babylon.

- An appeal to put on beautiful garments (52:1-6).
 - Zion has lain prostrate, weak and helpless, like a woman in a drunken stupor, having drained the cup of God's fury. But the time has come for her to arise and take her rightful place as a queen.
 - All who enter spiritual Zion will have done so with a circumcision not made with hands. In the day of Zion's strength and beauty, God's people will know that it was God who spoke and that He keeps His word, fulfilling it in His own time. God has right to release His captive people.
- The herald of good news (52:7-12).
 - Watchmen were entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the city and keeping people informed. As they see the herald approaching with the good tidings, they break forth in unison, singing praises to God who reigns and has redeemed Zion.
 - The work of God in delivering Zion through Cyrus foreshadows what will be completed by the Servant. The prophet's call to depart is urgent. God will lead in the front and protect in the rear. They will be surrounded by His presence.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- Exaltation of the Servant (52:13-15).
 - The Servant will conquer as a sufferer, not a warrior. The final "song" deals with purpose and achievement. The Servant will act with such divine insight and understanding as to produce effective and successful results (cf. Jeremiah 23:5). It is a progressive development.
 - Many will be astonished or struck with amazement at what they see. In contempt, they turn away in disgust. What the people found was utterly contrary to what they were looking for. They first saw His marred visage, but are then amazed as they behold His exaltation.
- Acquaintance with grief (53:1-3).
 - The "arm of the Lord" is a metonymy for the power of God which is revealed in the message and exerted in the salvation which results from believing it (cf. 51:5; 52:10; cf. John 12:37-41; Romans 10:16-21).
 - The dry ground was the fallen lot of the house of David. The spiritual sickness of the human race caused Him deep concern and mental anguish, sorrow of soul under which He groaned with grief.
- The Servant's vicarious suffering (53:4-6).
 - The Servant willingly took these burdens upon Himself. But the people regarded Him as smitten and punished for His own sins.

- The idea behind laying iniquity on the Messiah is that He is the sin offering for us. The Lord gave Him up for our sins. To bear sins is to remove them, not impute them to Himself.
- The total submission of the Servant (53:7-9).
 - From a violent miscarriage of justice He was led away to death. The people of His generation saw Him as a blasphemer deserving death.
 - All of the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God spring from this passage. "Cut off" indicates the violent nature of His death.
 - Christ's life was always above reproach. He had done no criminal act and had not failed in His work and mission; therefore, His Father saw to it that the faithful Servant received an honorable burial.
- Victory and reward (53:10-12).
 - Before His exaltation, He must be subjected to extreme humiliation. God experienced an emotional delight because of the suffering of the Servant. The Servant would triumph in victory over Satan.
 - The "pouring out" indicates a deliberate act; it was not accidental. In Him all offerings for cleansing find their fulfillment and all point to Him (Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:10). He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Isaiah 54:1-57:21

- The song of salvation (54:1-17).
 - The joy and enlargement of Zion (54:1-8).
 - Vss. 1-5 are a development of 49:14-23. The desolate period of devastation and barrenness, the result of judgment, is over. Zion learned the tragedy of sin and will now be taken back by her husband to bear spiritual children.
 - Zion is not to be in fear or terror of any external force, for there is none that can overcome her in her new relationship with God.
 - Though He had hid His face for a small moment, with great mercies He will gather her to Himself. The spiritually devastated city will be inhabited by a spiritually renewed citizenry (1 Peter 2:9).
 - The merciful Lord (54:9-10).
 - With overflowing wrath against the sins of His people He has purged them, and restored a remnant as His wife.
 - Though she might be unmercifully persecuted by her enemies and forced to pass through the floods and fires of tribulation, the true spiritual Zion will never be the object of God's wrath and judgment of destruction. He swears He will never again be wroth with or rebuke them as He had fleshly Israel.
 - Not only will God's wrath never be demonstrated against His spiritual people, but also His kindness and covenant of peace will

never depart from them. A firm foundation or seal is upon His people (2 Timothy 2:19).

- Jerusalem's glory (54:11-17).
 - In lavish terms God describes the beauty of the new community of redeemed people. It is a glory that is both inside and outside.
 - God's righteousness is the basis of the righteousness and salvation of the citizens of spiritual Zion. Every tongue that accuses her shall be condemned by the truth abiding in His people.
- The invitation of salvation (55:1-13).
 - The offer without price (55:1-5).
 - The world has expended its energies in search of commodities which fail to satisfy spiritual hunger and thirst, leaving the soul to dry up and perish.
 - The fulfillment of this covenant was as certain as the covenant of day and night. Only by coming to the Lord and hearing what He says, with the intent of doing it, can man live.
 - The "sure mercies of David" include all the promises made through the prophets concerning the blessings to be bestowed by the seed of David, who will be a light and salvation to the nations (cf. Acts 13:34).
 - Seeking the Lord (55:6-13).
 - The "wicked" and the "unrighteous" are the same class of people -- men who act contrary to God's character and will and whose thoughts are to commit evil. The response to God's call involves a complete change of both lifestyle and heart.
 - God's ways and thoughts are greatly superior to those of man. The difference is illustrated by the height of the heavens above the earth, an infinite measure (cf. Psalm 57:5, 11). God's word will fulfill His purpose in the heart of those who draw near.
- Blessings extended to the Gentiles (56:1-8).
 - From the divine point of view, the time of deliverance was drawing near. Justice denotes equitable dealings and impartial decisions in civil and religious government; righteousness is behavior in accordance with God's ethical and moral standard.
 - Barriers that formerly separated certain classes of persons from God's assembly are to be removed. A name given to a member of God's spiritual family cannot be cut off.
 - God promises that no one who comes according to His will shall be rejected (cf. John 6:37). The Gentiles responded in great numbers.
- A rebuke to those who refuse salvation (56:9-57:21).
 - A rebuke of the blind watchman (56:9-12).

- God has raised up watchmen, but many of them are blind to the dangers; they are without knowledge of God and their responsibility to Him. Their concern should have been for the people.
- The covetous spirit extends from the kings down to the least of their subjects, and even includes prophets and priests (Jeremiah 6:13). They are never satisfied with their positions before God, but turn aside to gain.
- The blessings of the righteous dead (57:1-2).
 - “Perish” can mean either a violent or natural death. In perishing the righteous man dies unobserved, and his influence on the ungodly world is lost. When the merciful or godly man is taken away, it is actually a blessing for him: he will be spared from the calamity.
 - The righteous man experiences the eternal rest of victory and redemption which the Lord intends for His people.
 - Not only will the righteous man escape the evil which is to come upon the people, but he will also partake of that well-being, wholeness and completeness for which the soul of the righteous yearns. This foreshadows the full revelation in the New Testament.
- Idolatry and faithlessness severely rebuked (57:3-13).
 - In this section we have a description of the spiritual character of the nation, a recapitulation of the charges made in the first two chapters. The children of Judah are children of idolatry.
 - In transgressing God’s laws and serving idols they, not the righteous, are the contemptible ones. They have committed total apostasy. Idolatry was practiced everywhere -- valleys, mountains and everywhere in between.
 - God will take vengeance upon those who make offerings to idols; they will be left to the emptiness of their false gods. This will be their portion.
 - All of Judah’s zealous works in making and serving idols and their fervent appeal to kings will be for nought. For a long time He has held His peace, but His longsuffering has availed nothing.
- The condescending love of God (57:14-21).
 - The contrite spirit is the brokenhearted person who is crushed beneath the weight of sin; the humble spirit is the person who bows before God, acknowledging his sinfulness and total dependence on the Lord.
 - God will create a new “fruit of the lips,” the message and joyous refrain of peace which follows God’s healing the nation. The wicked contribute nothing to moral and spiritual life.