

“The Servant Songs of Isaiah”

Part 2 - Various Scriptures
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Jeff: Our gracious Father in heaven, we bow before You this morning, recognizing Your majesty, Your sovereignty, Your aseity, your immutability—all of those things that are Yours and belong to You and You alone. We know that we belong to You through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ by the application of the Holy Spirit to our lives. Father, we thank You that we are different from the time that we were converted. We’re thankful that You saved us from the kingdom of darkness, that You brought us into the wonderful light of Your Son. And Father, we are thankful that we continue to change, that we’re shaped after the Holy Spirit’s work in us to mirror the image of Christ our Lord. And Father, it’s our desire that You would continue that work in us until the day of completion, either upon our death or when You return again in glory. We ask, Lord, that You would bless us, that You would strengthen us, and that You would ready us to hear the Word today—that we might be edified by it, of course,—but that it might not only enlighten our minds, but also that it might overflow from us to those around us and that we might certainly be lights in this very dark world.

Father, we ask that Your hand might be upon us for good in that endeavor. And Father, as we think about studying Your word we also think about the Clouser family. We ask that Your comfort would be with them. And we pray for Kevin and we ask for his health. We pray for Bob. And Lord, we pray that You would continue to make him well. Father, we certainly pray for Your hand to be upon us as a group. And Lord, we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, we’re thinking about Isaiah. We’re thinking particularly not just about Isaiah in general. But we’re thinking about a snippet in Isaiah; we’re thinking about the Servant Songs. And the Servant Songs are a fundamental portion of Isaiah. And what we’re trying to do now as we look at those Servant songs is that we’re trying to ask the question: how do they fit? How do they fit within seeing through the scope of redemptive history? And so we looked at just the beginning portion of this as I started to hurry us through. So I’m just going to go back and take a minute and work our way through this point to get us up to where we were in it and we’ll continue you to think on from there.

But I said to you the last time that when you think about Isaiah you think about Isaiah as part of the law. And you remember I said that you think about Genesis chapter 3 and the Fall and the recovery of mankind by God, visiting Adam in the cool of the day. And then you think of its fulfillment—the promise of the gospel, its fulfillment in Christ.

One of the things that we need to remember is that in the intervening time there is law. Isaiah belongs to that period of law in the intervening time. The question that is often posed is why the law? Why the law to begin with?

And this is that promise given. The promise is reiterated to Abraham: that he will be a great nation. He will be the inheritor of a land. And the people who will inhabit that land will be a blessing to all the nations. That’s fulfilled in Jesus. And so when we get to Galatians chapter 3 we find that Abraham is in fact a man of faith; he is a believer. And if we are people of faith then we are children of Abraham.

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So if that's the case, then you have this injection of law. And the question then becomes: why the law? And I think that's a question we all need to struggle through, and we did a little bit the last time. We did turn to Galatians chapter 3. And that's where Paul asks us. Does the law which comes after the promise actually nullify or make void the promise? And so we're now operating by a completely new system; we're operating by law and not the promise. Is that what happened?

And Paul says absolutely not; that's not what happened. The law does not nullify the promise at all. So why the law? His answer to that question is that the law drives us to the promise. Once we see ourselves in light of the law, once the schoolmaster of the law has its way with us, then we're driven back to the promise. And so that's how the law fits in.

Now let me walk through Biblical history. Let's just take a look at what it is that we're seeing by way of explanation. Again, think of Adam and Eve. We talked about them the last time. They were given a precept to obey. They failed to obey the precept. They were given the penalty of that precept when they could have had the promise which was eternal life. They had the penalty of the precept. And yet God meets them in the cool of the day. He meets them walking in the cool of the day. The cool of the day is probably the storm of the day, not the cool breeze of the day. And He cuts a new covenant with them. And that new covenant is the covenant of grace. And the covenant of grace has five covenantal exfoliations.

When you think of the covenant of grace you don't think of one covenant with five covenants in it. It's one covenant with five exfoliations of the same covenant, and we call those exfoliations covenants. But they are one covenant. It is one covenant with five different unfoldings.

What do I mean by that? Well, think about the covenant of grace for a minute. If you think about it, like I said it's like a flower unfolding; it's one flower but it has various exfoliations. And one of those exfoliations, remember, is the covenant with Noah. And that's the covenant that what? It preserves the stage of redemption, if we can say that.

And then the covenant of grace having preserved the stage of redemption also calls people out as actors upon that stage. And that's the Abrahamic covenant. God calls the Abrahamic family out and He gives them a promise that they'll inherit land, tells them that they'll be a people, and says, “You're going to be a blessing to all the nations.” That's the Abrahamic covenant.

Now the pause button comes at this point. We need to remember that the promise given to Abraham way back in Genesis chapter 12 is the promise that's brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. And remember, that's what we see in Galatians 3:7-9.

Transcriber's Note: Galatians 3:7-9, NKJV. *“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. For the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”*

Jeff: This is where Abraham is called a believer. He's called a man of faith. We're told that if we have faith that we are his children. And so it's a beautiful way of weaving together what was given in chapter 12 with what is revealed in Jesus Christ and taught to us by Paul in the New Testament. In other words, here is the gospel in Genesis chapter 12. Do you have it yet?

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Ted Wood: I’ll do it.

Jeff: Read Galatians 3:7-9.

Transcriber’s Note: Another translation.

Ted: Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

Jeff: Yeah. So lot’s there, right? The gospel was preached to him,--

Ted: Lot was not there.

Jeff: What was that?

Ted: Lot was not there. (*Groans and laughter*)

Jeff: In Genesis 12 the gospel is there. Lot is not there. (*Laughter*) In Galatians 3 we find that the gospel was preached to Abraham—the same gospel that we believe.

Remember the question: why the law? The law drives us to the promise. And yet as we’re walking through this Biblical history we go back to Abraham. We say, okay, what’s next?

What’s next is Joseph. Why Joseph? Well, Joseph brings about the promise. How so? He basically goes down into Egypt and he becomes a people who are led into the Promised Land. Now they’ve become a people. And by the end of Genesis 50 they are a people. By the time you get to Exodus chapter 1 they are in the land of Egypt and ready to go into the Promised Land. So God is making good on what He promised them. And now it is up to them after receiving and inherited the land to become a blessing to the nations.

And so that’s where they fail. And so let’s just think about it. And remember that I said to you last time that we’re still covering some of the stuff that we covered the last time. Remember that Exodus 20 was given to them as a law not so that they might be saved, but that because they were a redeemed people they were to obey the law and so model for the rest of the world the character of God that was exhibited in the law. And so let’s fast forward.

I want you to think about the failure of these people. I want you to think about the failure for a minute of these people to obey. And if you would just go with me to Joshua chapter 24, in Joshua chapter 24 verse 19, it says: “*But Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the LORD.’*”

This is right after Moses dies. They’re ready to enter into the Promised Land after the conquest of the land. And their leader doesn’t have much faith in them. He says to them, “*You are not able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your transgressions and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after having done you good.*”

“*And the people said, ‘No, but we will serve the LORD.’*”

Then verse 22. “*Joshua said to the people, ‘Your witness is against yourselves.’*” Verse 23: he says to them: “*Put away your foreign gods.*”

“*And the people said, ‘The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey.’*” And so Joshua makes the covenant with them.

And then we go to Judges, the very next book: Judges chapter 2, verses 6-15. And just check this out.

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“When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. And they buried him within the boundaries in the inheritance of the land.”

Now look down at verse 11. *“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals.”* And then jump down to verse 13. *“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. And He gave them over to plunderers who plundered them.”*

And that’s what Joshua was saying to them. He was saying to them, “Look, you are not going to obey. This doesn’t look good for you. You’re not going to keep the law.” And they don’t keep the law.

But the problem is this. When they fail to keep the law they fail to go to the sacrificial system to find forgiveness in it and find the promise revealed in it. The law was always to drive them to the promised Messiah revealed to them in the sacrificial system.

They don’t do that. They begin to invest more weight in their own traditions that will give them the appearance of law keeping, so that by the time you get to Jesus they have traditions built up that will give them the appearance of law keeping. And they do not put their faith in the Messiah who is to come. And that’s where you are by the time you get to —You were going to say something.

Ted: I was just going to say that it’s not only that the Israelites didn’t do it; they were not able to do it. I think that verse in Joshua, 24:19, is very telling. *“You are not able to serve the LORD.”* And that Hebrew word means that you don’t have the power to do it. And nothing has changed from that point to this when it comes to people’s ability to serve God.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: So God says, “Have faith in Me; trust Me.” People do not have the ability to do that. So those who say, “Well, it’s just the matter of a carnal man to exert faith and be saved,” that’s not enough, because the carnal man, the man in the flesh, the natural man, does not have the ability; it says it right there.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Nothing has changed, unless we’ve gotten better over the last 3500 years.

Jeff: No, that’s true. And it’s true in the gospel. Jesus talks in the same way.

Ted: And that’s for us who don’t hold to everybody having a choice or a chance; they don’t.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: They’re not able to.

Jeff: Well, they have a choice. But they’re not able to choose contrary to their own desires.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: So they desire their sin; they don’t desire God.

Ted: That’s right.

Jeff: The choice is held out to them. But they will always choose consistently with their own desires.

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Ted: *“The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit.”*

Jeff: Yeah. It’s sort of like walking into a morgue. You walk into a morgue and there’s a dead body lying on the table. And you can have a cup of soup there that you brought in had hold it out to the dead man. But he will not choose contrary to his own nature. He’s dead, right?

Ted: He’s not able.

Jeff: He’s not able to make himself alive so as to eat the food. His nature is at that point dead. Hey, Matt, how are you doing?

Matt Reichart: Hey, it’s good to be here with you. Just an observation about that. It’s interesting that they keep their commitment as long as the elders are there. So those people are backsliding.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: They didn’t keep their word. The people went AWOL. Why did they go back to the Baals? We think, you know, that they just got pulled back into the world. We can sit there and criticize them. But then we need to start with our generation, with our children and our grandchildren. If they acted properly, why did their children and grandchildren forsake the Lord?

Ted: Because they don’t have the ability.

Jeff: Yes, they don’t have the ability. But think about it and look at this from two different perspectives. Go with me just for a minute to 1 Peter chapter 2.

Matt: Salvation is always based on the promise.

Jeff: Sure.

Matt: With Israel their status was no different from our faith. We put our trust in Jesus Christ. But God chose Israel as His people to take that message to the world.

Jeff: Look at 1 Peter chapter 2. This is the latter part of chapter 2. It’s talking about those who disobey. Listen to what he says. *“They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”* And so they were predestined to stumble, as they do. Yet they stumble because they disobey the message. So it’s not as if God is not calling them through the proclamation of the Word to repent, because He certainly is. But they stumble. They don’t receive the proclamation because they were not destined to receive it.

So one of the things that we need to remember is that we need to remember that both of these things are true, right? They are held out the Word, and they are given a choice. Yet they will never choose contrary to their desires. If God has not changed their desires they will never be enabled to receive the message held out to them. So, you know, it’s one of those things where we never want to stop proclaiming the gospel to men, women and children, right? But what we need to realize is, the fruit of the proclamation is not with us. The harvest is really up to God, because He’s the One who is going to give ears to hear or not.

And you know, it’s interesting. This is just an aside. You were saying that they obeyed as long as Joshua and the elders were alive. And it’s so true, isn’t it? And you see that same kind of thing being picked up in the New Testament. You know, Paul says, “Don’t obey just when I’m around,” right? “Obey when I’m not around.”

And you asked about the children. Where are the children in the passing of the baton, and so forth. And that’s a really good question when it comes to generational Christianity.

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Not that anyone is saved by birth or because of the church. And yet we’re certainly meant to pass the faith on to our children, to teach them to believe and to teach them to repent.

And so the question becomes, how are we doing that? How are we passing along the faith to our children?

For instance, I’m going to tell you something. This is the danger of it all, right? When the Jews passed on the faith, what they did was that they passed on Pharisaism. And I’m going to tell you that I’m going to be very clear about that. It’s easy for us to pass on Pharisaical tendencies from one generation to the next. And what I mean by that is, say the right kind of words in the presence of the right kind of people. Do the right sorts of things to build up your reputation before others. Those are the kinds of things that you have a tendency to inculcate.

The problem is, for instance, that when we sin before our children we try and justify our actions, rather than showing them that our sin needs the forgiveness of Jesus. And what happens is that we teach them to say the right things in front of the right people and to do the right things to build up their reputation. When they see us err we justify ourselves to create loopholes for our behavior.

What do they learn, then? They learn that the law is given as a standard. But there are all these little laws and these little explanations that we can offer to justify our own behavior before God and before others. And they do the same. And the question is, where does the sacrifice of Christ fit into that?

The answer has to be that we need to be vulnerable enough to confess our sins to people around us—our children and our spouses and people like that,—because what we’re saying is that the law drives us to the gospel promise. That is really essential.

Ted: We have to be courageous—

Sig Tragard: You’re getting your own mike.

Ted: I just feel like talking this morning. *(Laughter)* We have to be courageous. But the church has to be accepting enough.

Jeff: Yeah!

Ted: Because, for instance, (not that I ever do this), *(Laughter)*, but I always tell my wife—

Sig: You’re gonna ask your wife that.

Ted: Honey, if you’re listening to this, it’s nothing really bad. *(Laughter)* This is already a caveat.

Jeff: This is recording. *(Laughter)*

Ted: Because I know the consequences of it. So often the church is not a place where you can be open because there are consequences.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: Some rightfully so, and maybe some not rightfully so. And it’s because we think deep down inside like the Hebrews, where we want to go back to the law; we just love that law. And if I recall that’s what Hebrews was about. Don’t go back.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: So I think it’s a huge issue. I’m all for confessing everything. It’s interesting that we don’t. We know from Scripture and the early church practice that they confessed their sins to each other.

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Jeff: The only thing I would say to you though—and you can feel free to push back on this—

Ted: Sure.

Jeff: One of the things that I would say to you is that when we think about the church, and we think about the church’s receptivity to that kind of posturing. The church can get a bad rap. And here’s what I mean by that. We have a tendency to think, why isn’t the church sort of receptive to my desire to stand up and confess my sins before them? And I think one of the things that we need to remember is that the church is much more like a family than we oftentimes think it is.

For instance, you go to a family reunion. And there are the old guys, the guards of the family sitting around. And they’re talking, you know, and they’re having a good time. And the cousins are all on the field playing.

Now let’s say that the old-timer gets up and walks across the yard and he stumbles and falls. Everybody runs to him, right? Everybody runs to him and tries to help him. But once he’s all right, everybody sort of goes back to where they were. So there’s real support from the family.

For instance, when the kids are talking they aren’t running over and telling the old guard what they’re talking about. They’re talking with one another. But the idea—and I don’t mean this to sound cliquish—is that, for instance there are groups within the church that we naturally associate with and talk with, and so on. And I think that’s right and indicative of a family. We share our concerns with a smaller group within the broader group.

Now, you know, that’s true of me. I have a small group of people that I share my personal struggles with. But I don’t stand up in front of the church and say, “This is what I’m struggling with.” I could do that. But I think the natural tendency is for me to share with a smaller group.

However, if my family got into some kind of a difficulty, I know the church would rally around me, like the old-timer that stumbles. Not that I’m an old-timer that stumbles. *(Laughter)* But you get the idea.

So I think that’s sort of a more family approach. I’m not saying that you did it, Ted. I used to really get frustrated with the church because I read Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*, and confessing our sins to one another, and so on. And I thought, where is this in the life of the church? I adjusted my thinking to realize that we’re much more like a family. And it helped me quite a bit to think about the church and about how the church really is there and present for people. It’s just that not everybody is present and for people in the same way as everyone else.

Ted: I agree with you 100%. I would say that everything you said I agree with. I don’t think it’s that the church is being bad and that it ought to do this. I don’t think it’s able to do that, to be that receptive. I don’t think there’s that ability to be like that. There are things we can do to move it in that direction. And I think that the smaller the fellowships in the church bodies and congregations, the better, because—

Jeff: I just want to push back, and I want you to interact with this.

Ted: Sorry, everyone. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: No, you’re not. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, when we think of the church, we think of a bunch of people.

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Transcriber’s Note: Jeff draws a circle.

Jeff: And we think of a bunch of people on all different levels of spiritual maturity, okay? So this is the really weak believer. This is the strong believer. This is the moderate believer. It has all different people.

And incidentally, going back to Bonhoeffer, Bonhoeffer said that churches are made up of all different sorts of people at all sorts of levels, and that’s right and good. And that teaches the strong to bear with the weak and the weak to live with the strong, and so on. It also teaches us that not everybody thinks the same about every issue.

The thing I want to push back on is that the smaller the church gets, the more alike it becomes.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: And the more alike it becomes, it becomes dangerous, right?, because then it doesn’t have toleration for anybody on the outside. And I think that the larger the church becomes, and the more that you can build within the church, the more the strong bear with the weak.

I mean, let’s face it. Let’s just take the masking issue, or the vaccination issue, which I would say are issues that are not clear cut in the Scriptures as to which side to take, right? I mean, I think in 3 Corinthians it does say something about vaccines. *(Laughter)*

Mike Davis: 2 Opinions chapter 2 talks about that.

Jeff: 2 Opinions chapter 2 talks about that. *(Laughter)* So you take that issue. Well, I’ve got news for you. If you’ve lived in the church for a year-and-a-half, you know as well as I do that there is nothing that makes people more angry than talk of masking or vaccination. And the problem is that the people who are the most angry on either end of the spectrum want the church to declare something.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: About their rightness—whether that’s wearing masking or not wearing masking. They want the church to make some sort of declaration. It’s either un-Christian not to wear a mask, or it’s fear to wear a mask, right? So both are trying to take their root in the Scriptures. There’s nothing that they’re doing except expressing their strong felt opinions.

And here’s what I would say. The church that continues to get smaller, such that the people who are left in the community are the non-maskers is not a stronger community. I mean, the bottom line is this. One day I said to my wife, “I hope when this is all over that we have both people who are still wearing masks and those who are strongly opposed to it, who can still get together and worship and love one another,” because that’s a healthy church that’s going to continue to grow through those kinds of differences that are strongly felt. I think that has to be strong and weak, and so forth.

Sig: Is it Matt? Are you here to fight Ted? *(Laughter)*

Matt: It’s about the church, just to defend the church. We find the church in corporate America. I remember talking to a pastor of one of the churches here. And he said that a lot of people basically run in and run out. Is that really the church that we’re talking about? Or are we engaged in fellowship so that the church acts as one single group? Is that the church? Are small groups a part of the church? I had a small group last night, people from probably seven different churches. When we get together we are part of the church. We are part of that fellowship, that intimate sharing of the community. So it’s the definition of the church. It’s not a building, but I think it’s a movement of the Holy Spirit.

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And it’s a community living life together and having the picture of a family. And I have 31 grandkids. When they get together they’re out playing.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: And having fun. They won’t necessarily sit on the couch and talk to their granddad.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: But they are all together and having fun. And we don’t just come in and read the Scripture. We hang and we do life together for hours. People who just come to church and hear the message and leave are missing out on the whole experience of life and fellowship.

Jeff: Yeah, and that’s very true. I once had an experience where I had a guy come to church and say to me, “You know, your church is one of the most unfriendly churches I’ve ever been too.” And I’d watched him for several months come in and leave just as quickly as anything. So he took me out to lunch to tell me that. *(Laughter)*

So I felt obligated to tell him that the church is like a stream. It’s like a cool, refreshing stream on a summer day. You can either put your toe in, or you can put your whole body into the stream and get cooled off. And I said, “You know, when you come to worship, it’s sort of like putting your toe in.”

And he got it. He started coming more regularly. And it was about six months later that he invited me to lunch again. And I thought, oh, man, here we go! *(Laughter)* He invited me to lunch and he said, “Hey, I was wrong about this.” He joined the church and they are really active folks. He took my advice. And he told his wife, “We really need to become involved.”

Matt: You only get out of it what you put into it.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: And then he became unfriendly, too. *(Laughter)*

Sig: I think you all ought to get Matt to come to your church. He’s got 31 grandchildren. Did you hear that? You’re not even past 60, are you?

Matt: I am 60.

Sig: Thirty-one grandchildren! *(Laughter)* I have one.

Matt: I’ll lend you some. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: My kids are talking. “We’re getting dogs, Dad.” *(Laughter)* What did I do wrong? So the history of Israel is one failure after another. And we see this in the life of David. He is a man after God’s own heart. But his sin with Bathsheba is such that the sword never departs from his house. And we know that his son takes over; Solomon takes over.

And I’m not wanting to say this. I want to be careful and just say this to you. The consequences of sin are real. But I think we have to be very careful in sort of taking David as a model of what happens to everybody who sins. I think a lot of people have the tendency to look at David and say that the sin of David was such that the sword never left his own house, and that must be the way that God deals with every sinner, even a believing sinner.

And I want to say this to you. When you think about covenant history, in the same way that what happens with Christ is unrepeatable, we’re not looking for another Gethsemane; we’re not looking for another cross. In the same way David is a particularly significant

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figure in redemptive history. And what happens to David happens to David for a covenantal reason. You can't just take David's experience. "I bless it. I guess the sword is never going to depart from my house."

It's just not so. Sin has consequences. Yet there is not a special curse upon your house like David's. Why do I say that? Well because God pronounced that on David. He said to David, "Because of this the sword is never going to leave your house." You can't say that's to me; it was to David. We have to take care in reading the Scriptures so that when things are said to specific people in specific times that we don't turn those things around to us. We often turn those things around if they're good to us. But we don't turn the bad things around.

But this is one of those rare instances where we have a tendency to turn this bad one around, sort of wallow in it, and make it an excuse for our continued bad behavior.

Anyway, Solomon comes to power. And Solomon comes to power and doesn't do any better than his father; actually he does worse. Remember that David unites the kingdom. Solomon comes to power and he's already married to an unbelieving woman. He accumulates wives, he accumulates wealth, he accumulates slaves. He does all kinds of bad things such that God says, "You know, I'm going to split the kingdom after you." And his son Rehoboam comes to power.

Rehoboam is very foolish. He seeks elder counsel; he seeks his buddies' counsel. His buddies say, "You know what? Tell them that you thought my dad's finger was thick. Wait till you get a load of me." I can say this to you men. This is probably a euphemism not for his finger but for his genitalia. *(Laughter)*

Gary Dunbar: He was the first Democrat.

Jeff: What's that?

Gary Dunbar: He was the first Democrat. *(Groans)*

Jeff: So anyway he decides to take the advice of his young friends and tell his political patrons to wait till they get a load of him. And they say, "No, wait till you get a load of us, because we're leaving."

And so Jeroboam organizes the ten tribes of Israel to depart, leaving Rehoboam with two tribes: hence the North Israel and the South Judah, and they're always divided.

And so, as you see the picture of Israel there, the North always has bad kings. And they are deported into exile under the Assyrians in 722. The South has some good kings. But the problem is, they're not good enough. They are taken into exile in 586 by the Babylonians. And so this is just a picture of the divided kingdom.

After the exile is over they are brought together. Isaiah fits here into this portion of God's history, of redemptive history.

So it's not a great time in history for redemption. I mean, when you think about it it's pretty rough. And the law is there. But the law by the time of Isaiah is being completely ill-used. And Isaiah is not only trying to get them to understand that the law judges them and finds them guilty because it's God's law. But there's an alternative. And that alternative is the forgiveness that God provides in the sacrificial system that is going to be pitched to them in the imagery of the suffering Servant. The suffering Servant is the Lamb led to slaughter, who in faith they can have forgiveness. And so this is where we are in terms of the history.

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So let me give you an outline of Isaiah. Let me see if I can work through this. And this is kind of funny. This is one of those Bible studies that’s a little more historically oriented. We’re going to get into the text maybe next week, hopefully next week. But the idea is that I found it just absolutely delightful how the Bible study has sort of turned to a very practical bent. That’s fine with me. And so any time if you want to do that sort of thing, please do.

Well, in chapters 1-5 you get Israel’s condition, and it’s a sinful one. They’re sick in the head; they’re sick with sin. The condition is very pitiful. They’re a broken-down vineyard. Remember that chapter 5 talks about them being a vineyard that’s overrun—a vineyard that God planted.

In Isaiah chapter 6 we find the vision of the holy God. The vision of the holy God is well known to us because we’re R. C. Sproul fans. (No, I’m just kidding!) (*Laughter*) You get it. If you’ve read *The Holiness of God* you know exactly what that’s all about. But it is fascinating, and sometime we ought to take a look at it.

I want you to notice Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39. What we have here is that we have the Assyrian invasion mentioned in Ch. 7-12. And we have the Babylonian invasion mentioned in Ch. 36-39.

So what do we have. In this eighth-century prophet we have a prophecy of the North and their eventual collapse under the Assyrians. Actually 36-39 is not 586, but it’s forecasting 586. But we have the mention of the Babylonians and how they’re going to take Hezekiah or Hezekiah’s posterity in the South into captivity.

So after you have the condition and the God who will meet the condition you have these book ends—one about the Assyrian captivity and the other one about the Babylonian captivity. Now what’s in between those book ends?

Now you notice that’s not the end of the book of Isaiah. 36-39 is not the end of the book of Isaiah. So hold on to that thought. So between those book ends you have these chapters on judgment. You have the chapter on folly. Right in the middle you have the section on the sovereignty of God. So God is sovereign over what’s happening. He’s sovereign in judgment and He’s sovereign in comparison to their foolishness. And so in terms of a large overview of Isaiah this is what you’re getting.

Now in Isaiah 40 you have restoration. Now Isaiah 40 comes along on the heels of chapter 39. There are some liberal scholars who come along and they’ll say something like this. They’ll say that there is Deutero-Isaiah. And they’ll say it’s Deutero-Isaiah because here’s the problem. Isaiah 40 coming after Isaiah 39 prophecies about restoration of the captivity foretold in 36-39. So liberal scholars are going to say, “How could this be?” In other words, how could Isaiah actually be telling the future at this point? He can’t be. Isaiah 40 has to be written later, after the deportees come back from exile. But after they come back from exile this book is written, and so we really have two Isaiahs—maybe an original Isaiah and a later Isaiah, because the original Isaiah couldn’t have prophesied about what was to come; certainly not.

Why is that? Well it’s because after chapter 40 you get the mention of Cyrus. And Cyrus wouldn’t have even been alive at the time of Isaiah’s writing. So it can’t be Isaiah’s prophesying; it can’t be that at all, right? That’s the idea. So they divide up the books.

So if you ever see a commentary that talks about Deutero-Isaiah you might as well throw it in the trash, because you’re getting a liberal perspective on the book of Isaiah.

“The Servant Songs of Isaiah”

And so then, what is Isaiah doing? Well, Isaiah is saying to his people, after he has just forecasted judgment on the North and the South, he’s saying, “God has not forgotten you. There will be a restoration.” And chapter 40 is rich in terms of imagery. This is where you get the shepherd carrying the sheep. And so he’s saying to the people, “Good news is coming.” And he’s saying this to them before they even go into captivity! I mean, that’s how good He is; that’s how good God is, to save the people who are judged and going into captivity. “I’m going to restore you.” That’s the idea.

From Ch. 40-48 what you get is, you get this run of the chapter on who is really God? This is where you get the chapter where you can cut down a log and you can carve it into a statue, and you can bow down to it and cook your food over the other part of it and call it God. It just shows your folly, right? It shows your stupidity.

But God is God. In fact this is that section where oftentimes Isaiah the prophet says, “If your log is God, go to it and ask it,” right?

And then we find in 49-55 the history of the suffering Servant. Those are the Servant texts—not all of them—but that’s where we find the concentration of it. And then Israel is summoned to God in 56-66; those are the final chapters. It’s a summons of belief in God.

And that basically then in a hurried way is the remainder of Isaiah and how to see it. We’re going to look at some of the texts in that suffering Servant section, and we’ll start with the next one next time. All right. So any thoughts on anything before we end? Well, we can pick it up next time.

Matt: It just goes to show that you can choose your choices, but you can’t choose the consequences of your choices.

Ted: What did he say?

Jeff: You can choose your choices, but you can’t choose the consequences of your choices.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: Although David did, right? Remember David when he was able to choose? Huh? *(Laughter)* I love that! David says, “I think I’ll fall into the hands of God because He’s merciful, rather than falling into the hands of man.” I love that; that’s great!

Okay. Well, let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given, and for the rich discussion we’ve had about Your church and about life in it. Thank You for the prophecy of Isaiah. Thank You, Father, that though it’s about a time period of law, it still has relevance to us because in it we’re reminded of our need for the promise. But also we see the rich portraits of the Savior painted for us in the suffering Servant passages. And therein we get to adore our Savior all the more. And so, Father, as we think about these passages through Isaiah, bless us and strengthen us. And we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*