

# Christ in Isaiah

## Part 4

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| Speaker        | J.S. Blackburn  |
| Duration       | 01:06:17  |
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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] The reading tonight, again from the book of the prophet Isaiah, is taken from chapters 40 and 42.

Chapter 40 of the book of Isaiah first, from verse 25 to 31. Prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 25 to 31. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number. He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, [00:01:03] that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. And now in chapter 42, verse 1, Isaiah 42, verse 1, Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, and whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised [00:02:05] reed shall he not break, and the smoking flux shall he not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth. And the Isles shall wait for his law. That's all we're going to read tonight. Book two of the Prophet Isaiah is divided by the Spirit of God. I mean by that that we are not dependent upon the modern chapter makers for the division. Book two of Isaiah, from chapters 40 to the end, chapter 66, is divided by the Spirit of God into three equal sections of nine chapters, the first of which forms our theme for this evening, chapters 40 to 48. The first and second of these two sections [00:03:10] are both ended by the words, there is no peace saith my God to the wicked. It's perhaps the last of those very vivid allusions to moving water that Isaiah uses to paint his word pictures and give us his impressions, that the wicked are like a troubled sea, all the time casting up dirt and everything that's objectionable. The wicked are like a troubled sea. There is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked. In the first two cases, then the section ends with this, and we take this as part of the arranging of the Spirit of God. Now in this whole part of the book of our Prophet, that is from the whole book [00:04:06] from chapter 40, the most interesting subject to every Christian heart is the appearance there, and only there, of the personage who is called the Servant of Jehovah. This might appear to us to be a fairly common kind of designation for a person in Holy Scripture, a Servant of Jehovah, but when we gather together the things that are said in these four Servant poems, then we very quickly realize that this is no ordinary person. The Servant of Jehovah is himself the living God, come down in order that he might do a work, perform a tremendous work on the part of the Lord

[00:05:06] who sent him. And I do pray most earnestly that the great object that we have before us in these meetings might in a very particular way, today and tomorrow, if it please the Lord to tarry, that our hearts might be made to burn within us as we meditate upon these beautiful Servant poems.

The first one we read this evening, the first few verses of chapter 42, Behold my servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. And then there's quite a gap, and it's in the next major section of the book, in chapter 49, beginning, Listen, O Isles, unto me. The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. This is the second of [00:06:02] the Servant poems. In chapter 50, especially when we come to verse 4, The Lord God hath given me the tan of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. We have the third of the Servant poems, and then, I need hardly say, the last and the highest and the most wonderful, beginning in verse 13 of chapter 52, Behold my servant shall deal prudently. And going on to the passage we all know so well in chapter 53. These are the four Servant poems.

Now, if there was any need to do so, we could very easily confirm, most indisputably, if there was any need to do so, that it is the intention of the Spirit of God that these passages to speak to us [00:07:05] of none else than the Lord Jesus Christ. The first passage that we read in chapter 42 is quoted with the usual differences that, changing from one language to another, make in Matthew 12, verses 18 to 20. And for the moment, passing over the others, chapter 53 is frequently quoted, we know so well, By whose stripes we are healed, Peter says, who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, by whose stripes we are healed. Or the familiar story of the Ethiopian eunuch, how he was reading, how his life was taken from the earth, the life of this servant of the Lord. And he asked the question, Of whom speaketh the prophet, of himself or some other man? And beginning at that scripture, Philip preached unto him, Jesus. We hardly need, most of us, [00:08:06] to have it pointed out to us that we're an absolutely solid ground in detaching these four passages from their context, however vile as that may seem, and allowing them to speak directly to our hearts of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it would appear, since it's the intention of the Spirit of God that we should apply this title, the servant of Jehovah, in a very special and distinctive way to the Lord Jesus Christ, it's worthwhile to stop, although the question is simple, and ask what exactly is the idea of a servant? It must be given its pure and full significance in passages like this. And we must think, I suggest therefore, as the word servant does, meaning a person who undertakes a commission or commissions for another, and that [00:09:05] commission involves toil and hardship. We shall see how, in a sense, far deeper than any such definition could present to us. This definition, as it eneraltes, gives us a beginning to understand the way it's applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the servant of Jehovah. He came to fulfill a commission, and in the end we find that that commission involved, in the deepest, deepest sense, it involved the trouble of his soul. Now one of the puzzles of this particular chapter 42 that we have in our passage this evening, one of the puzzles is that there isn't the slightest doubt that in the first place, the term the servant of Jehovah applies to God's earthly people, Israel. [00:10:04] Look at chapter 41, the chapter before the one we read, verse 8, chapter 41, verse 8, But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen. If we look in the latter part of the chapter of which you read the first four verses, chapter 42, verse 19, Hear ye death, verse 18, Hear ye death, and look ye blind, that ye may see who is blind, but my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I sent. Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant, seeing many things, but thou observest not, opening the ears, but heareth not. Now it's very plain, right through to the end of this section that we're speaking of, although the concept occurs nowhere else than in these particular nine chapters, yet it's very plain [00:11:04] that in these chapters, in the first place, first approach to the subject, in these chapters, the servant of the Lord is Israel, his earthly people. In the very last verses of the section, in verse 20 of chapter 48, in calling the captives to

come out of Babylon, the word says, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. So not only before this passage, first four verses of chapter 42, but right through to the end of this whole section, the servant of the Lord is Israel. And we shall see very plainly how, although called to be the servant of the Lord, and given that great honor to be his witnesses in the world, yet they lamentably failed. They were deaf, and they were blind, and their hearts were dull, and they failed altogether to fulfill the work [00:12:08] that's involved in being the servant of the Lord. How then can we understand, amidst all these plain statements, how can we understand chapter 42, verses 1 to 4, as applying to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, I suggest, can do no more than suggest, but it certainly is a thought that has given great satisfaction to myself at any rate in mind and heart, and that is that in those four verses in chapter 42, we have the outline of what the servant should be. We have the statement of what the servant is in ideal, so that, since it says that Israel was a failure as the servant, and blind and deaf, both they could see, when the words were addressed to them, and we can see what the servant of the Lord ought to be. That explains the presence of this passage amongst the others [00:13:05] that apply the term to Israel, but it also makes it very plain how the passage was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. It removes all difficulty, so far as I'm concerned, to think of these first four verses as being the Lord's servant in ideal, and therefore, obviously, they are to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the only way to understand another puzzle, when we come to the next servant poem in chapter 49, is that in that chapter, we read of the moment when the Lord Jesus Christ is substituted, or substitutes himself, for Israel as the servant of the Lord, and from henceforth, there's no doubt at all, the one who fulfills this delineation is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, a little later, I hope we shall come back to this particular delineation of the Lord's [00:14:05] servant in ideal, recognizing and just immediately going to the fact that it was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. These particular verses in chapter 42, they present to us his work, what the job was for which the servant came and was sent, and his character. The wonderful character of the Lord Jesus Christ, seen here in a series of negatives, to which we shall come a little later. But certainly, how very sweetly, this point of view, that here we have the servant in ideal, an outline which can only be fulfilled by one, and that is the perfect blessed Son of God, how sweetly it speaks to our hearts to think of this chapter 42 and its first four verses like this. Now, I must again spend a few minutes on the background to these chapters, because it presents [00:15:07] to us how vastly different the circumstances are from the circumstances which dominated the story in chapters 1 to 39. In the first place, in these chapters, Israel is captive. If you like to look in the same chapter 42 and verse 7, then it says the Lord, in verse 6, the Lord has called his servant, going on to verse 7, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. If we look at verse 22, we find the people who are the subject of these chapters described similarly. But this is a people robbed and spoiled, they are all of them snared in holes, and they're hid in prison houses. They are a prey and non [00:16:06] deliverance for a spoil and non self-restore. And of course other verses could be quoted to indicate that in these chapters, God's people Israel are regarded as prisoners in captivity, in exile. Not only so, but we find that the power that has captivated them is named. There are several cases in these chapters which we will make reference to, but in particular in the end of chapter 48, at the very end of the section, the point to which in its first meaning everything goes forward is, go ye forth from Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it, even to the end of the earth, say ye, the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. And one final thing, in chapter 44 verse 26, we find that their own land is now desolate, [00:17:12] with the cities broken down. Chapter 44 verse 26, he confirms the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, that saith to Jerusalem, thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah thou shalt be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof. In other words, Jerusalem has been depopulated, and the cities of Judah have been burnt down, and that land is decayed and desolate. So that the first great point about the circumstances of the background of these chapters is that God's earthly people, for the very reason

that they fail to be the witnesses for the Lord, they're captives in the distant land of Babylon. The next thing that can be seen very plainly [00:18:05] about the background is that the chapters make a very plain reference to a great conqueror who has appeared, and he's very quickly named as Cyrus. In chapter 41, for example, the Lord is addressing a concourse of peoples, and he says, Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings. He gave them as dust to his sword, as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them and passed safely, even by the way they had not gone with his feet. In other words, there is a tremendous conqueror. At the same time as God's earthly people were in captivity, a great conqueror had gone out, [00:19:02] and he's very soon named as Cyrus, who is the person, as we know, who eventually delivered God's people by bringing down Babylon. Now if the people are still captives, and yet this great conqueror Cyrus has gone forward, then there's no question at all that all this took place very close to 200 years after the death of Isaiah. You remember the first verses of the book tell us that Isaiah was the first person, the first ruler of Judah, in whose reign Isaiah prophesied, and we have the reference in chapter 5 to the death of King Isaiah. These events took place very close to 200 years after the first messages that the Prophet wrote. Now, how is it possible that this [00:20:07] should be so? Well, since these chapters name the deliverer Cyrus, then of course the hostile critic has had to have resource to believing, or pretending, that someone else wrote these late chapters. Well, the whole of the New Testament so utterly and simply disposes of that, and assures us that these chapters are part of the book of Isaiah, and part of the work of the Prophet Isaiah, we don't need to stop and think about this, but it does involve the fact that 200 years before he came, or nearly 200 years before he came, God named beforehand the great conqueror who would set his people free, bring down the great city of Babel on the Lady of Kingdoms, and set free his people. And it's not surprising that we shall see that again and again in this section. The Lord is [00:21:07] appealing to the fact, I told you long before, I'm telling you long before. When they come to read it, he says, I told you long before, and this proves that I am God, and there is none else. Ask your false gods to tell you 200 years before. It cannot be done. I am God, and there is none else. Now, this is a very straightforward situation. It's not the way we would normally imagine it, but evidently the fact of the matter is that by the power of the Spirit of God, Isaiah took his place in spirit amongst the captive exiles in Babylon, 150 to 200 years later, because they were captives for 70 years. He took his place amongst them in the spirit, and he wrote to them, [00:22:05] he wrote to them words which would apply directly to them, and encourage them in their captivity, and present to them promises and encouragement of their deliverance, and he wrote it all 150 years beforehand. This is absolutely so miraculous as to be outside the mind of man to admit that such a thing took place. But for us, we realize full well that the future is an open book with our God. And he does indeed show, not only in this, but in many another page of Holy Scripture, that since he tells from olden times that it will come to pass, he has proved, I am God, and there is none else. Now, once again, I must ask you to put your eyes down to the pages of the Bible, and to turn over the pages, and we shall go as rapidly as we can, consistent with a measure of clarity, go through these chapters to indicate what they mean. In chapter 40, [00:23:09] from verse 1 to verse 11, we have an introduction which has often been called the four voices. First of all, comfort ye my people, speak ye comfortably, or speak to the heart of Jerusalem. That's the first voice. The second one, the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord. The third voice, in verse 6, the voice said cry, and he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is the flower of the grass. And a fourth voice, in verse 9, O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength. Lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God. Now, if ever there was a passage which obviously had a minor meaning for the present time, and yet a far greater meaning [00:24:08] for the future, this is it. Because when you remember that the Prophet is addressing the desolate city, rubbed of all her people, broken down and in ruins, when you remember

that the Prophet, under these circumstances, is addressing Zion, he is saying to her, look, your long sorrow is over. The first voice that breaks the stillness after all these years, although written so long before, is the voice that comforts you, and says, look, your long trial is past, because God has indeed sent his afflictions unto you for your sins. And then the next voice talks about that great journey across the desert, that the exiles would take as they were coming back, and a highway was prepared for the Lord, who himself was bringing his people back again. And finally, when those [00:25:03] captive exiles are returned in verse 9 to Zion, and the great rejoicing was caused, then it was just as though God himself appeared there. But of course we know that each one of these, with a far greater truth, is speaking for the future. John the Baptist, announcing the coming of the Saviour, in verse 3, and the presence of Jehovah God amongst his people, according to the other voice. Now in verse 12, we have a most magnificent representation of the incomparable majesty of Jehovah. And I hope we should come back and think about this very particularly. The language of Isaiah in these parts is in itself incomparable, because it has a theme so absolutely magnificent as to surpass altogether the ordinary subjects of human words. It's talking about the incomparable majesty of [00:26:06] Jehovah, and there can be none like him in heaven or in earth. And this representation of the incomparable majesty of Jehovah is made to show how foolish are those who make idols to bow down to them. But the wonderful part of the passage is that this tremendous majesty and wisdom and power of Jehovah is brought down in the end to the comfort of those who feel themselves to be abandoned.

They say, in verse 27, they say, the Lord has forgotten us. Here we are, captive exiles. It's long since we had a word from the Lord. The Lord has forgotten us altogether. My ways hid from the Lord, and my judgments passed over from my God. But they are assured that although they are faint [00:27:02] and weary, yet the incomparable strength and power of the Lord is for them to renew their strength. And here is a promise that has sounded out to the people of God and sounds out to us especially this evening. Are we faint and weary? Does the thought sometimes creep into our hearts unbidden, but with unbelief that the Lord has forgotten us? He's not aware of our afflictions. Well, under these circumstances, the word says to us today, absolutely directly, speaking straight out of the sacred page, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Now, as I said before, chapter 41 addresses a great assembly of the nations about the sudden brilliant appearance of a great conqueror. That's quite plain. I read part of it in verses 1 to 7, [00:28:07] and I won't repeat it again. But after verse 7, we find another revelation, another delineation by the prophet of the utter folly of idols. When all the peoples of the world, all this great assembly of nations, heard of this tremendous conqueror who'd been let loose, then they turned to their idols. But the Lord says to his servant in verse 8, but thou, Israel, art my servant. As much as to say, as my witness, you won't turn to idolatry. Thou art my servant whom I have chosen. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth and called thee from the chief men thereof. Thou art my servant. I have chosen thee and not cast thee away. And there again, I repeat, we find Israel [00:29:05] as a servant of the Lord. Verse 25, when the question has been raised in the beginning, who raised up this great man from the east? And Cyrus, by the way, did arise in the far east of the Persian territory, territory of the Medes. Verse 25 gives the answer, I have raised up one from the north. He was, of course, from the northeast. Could be either north or east. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come. From the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name. He shall come upon princes, upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth the clay. And then once again, who has declared from the beginning that we may know, and before time that we may say, he is righteous? Well, it was the Lord who had declared from long beforehand that [00:30:01] this would come. In chapter 42, considering the question has been raised about idols and witness against them, we have in the first four verses, to which we shall return, a statement of the ideal delineation, the object and the character of the servant of the Lord. After this, we find, from

verse 5 to verse 17, that the Lord pledges his righteousness, that he will in the end restore his sanctuary. He pledges his righteousness to do so. He then speaks in verse 14 as though, during the captivity, the Lord has been silent, as though inactive regarding his people. But this time is past. The time of his afflictions upon them is past. I have long time hold in my peace. I have been still and refrained myself. Now will I cry like a traveling woman. I will destroy and [00:31:05] devour at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all herbs, and so on. The Lord was going to come in and act. At the end of that chapter, we have the statement I've already referred to, that in the face of all this, then the servant of the Lord is blind and deaf. He has not been able to perceive the words that the Lord has spoken to him, and this is why he has failed as the Lord's servant. Now in chapter 43, and the greater part of 44, in the face of their long experience of desolation, and in the face of the rapid approach of their deliverance, then the people of God are given comforting promises to support them. Look, for example, at verse 2. When thou passest through [00:32:05] the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, they shall not be burnt, neither shall they flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy servant, and so on. You have through that chapter the most encouraging promises. Once again, in the middle of chapter 44, you have, that's the next chapter, you have one of the most terrific of these passages about idolatry. Why is the Lord so keen about idolatry here? Well, because, of course, it's the greatest possible despite to the revelation that he made himself to his people, and through his people. Against this, above all things, there should have been his witnesses for the unique majesty of Jehovah, the God of Israel, and their greatest failure was not doing this. Although they had fallen into idolatry before, [00:33:05] they were in great danger of learning idolatry again in Babylon, and therefore it's witnessed that the Lord witnesses against it. But when you see, say, from verse 10 of chapter 44, but especially the irony, the folly of idolatry, it speaks out in verse 16. A man chooses, in verse 14, a piece of wood, and then it says in verse 16, part he burneth in the fire, part he uses to roast and eat flesh, and is satisfied. He warms himself and says, aha, I'm warm, I've seen the fire, and the rest thereof he makes a god. Even his graven image, he falleth down into it and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, deliver me, for thou art my God. The utter folly of idolatry is [00:34:07] represented in those verses. Of course, we have to remember that there are very, very explicit references in the New Testament to the danger of idolatry for the people of God, for taking that which is of ourselves and our own desires, and falling down and worshipping them. The greatest statement of this, of course, is ye cannot worship God and mammon. And after the revelation of the true God, and eternal life, in the end of the epistle of John, little children, keep yourselves from idols. So we have to be on our guard against something equally stupid and foolish, as well as equally and desperately sinful, of putting some other thing which is really from ourselves only, in the place that God only should have in our hearts. In the end of chapter 44, we have Cyrus named. 44, in verse 28, the Lord is describing himself and his works. Thus saith the Lord, [00:35:18] thy Redeemer, he has done these things, confirms the word of his servants. Verse 27, that saith to the deep, be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers. Verse 28, that saith to Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure. Even saints of Jerusalem thou shalt be built, and to the temple thy foundation shall be laid. Now when you reflect upon the fact that this was written 150, 200 years, 200 years beforehand, what a wonderful prophecy this is, and how clearly it locates what the circumstances of the people of God are. And chapter 45 is very largely about Cyrus, and the fact that he would deliver God's people by coming upon Babylon, [00:36:10] in verse 14, we find, thus saith the Lord, the labor of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabaeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine. The work of Cyrus was going to be to liberate his people from all their afflictions, and that occupies chapter 45. Now in chapter 46, we have the downfall of Babylon's gods. As a matter of fact, when Cyrus was beginning his conquests, then the king of Babylon carried away all their gods in order to rescue them from the conqueror. And this utterly absurd situation is made the [00:37:05]

purpose of a most touching appeal to his people, which also has its application to us. First verse of chapter 46, the names of the principal gods and idols of Babylon were Bel and Nebo. Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle. They are a burden to the weary beast, and themselves have gone into captivity. These gods, whom they worshipped and to whom they prayed to support them and help them, they themselves were a burden to weary beasts, and they themselves were carried away into captivity. But the Lord goes on to say, hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb, even to your old age I am he. Even to whose hairs will I carry you, I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you. This is a wonderful [00:38:06] representation to the hearts of the people in all ages, the people of God, that God, being our creator, those who trust in him, those who are really his people, worship and serve him, he will carry them and bear them and support them and strengthen all the days of their life. He says, as the Lord Jesus said, I am with you to the end of the age. And then in chapter 47 we have a kind of long ode on the fall of Babylon. In verse 1, Babylon is addressed, come down and sit in the dust, O daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground. In verse 5, we learn that she had called herself the Lady of Kingdoms, but it says, thou shalt be no more called the Lady of Kingdoms. In verse 11, [00:39:01] we're told in the end of it, desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. And in the end, verse 15, it says in the last words, there are none to save. And so we have it clearly brought to a point when what the Lord is leading to regarding his captive people in these verses is the destruction of Babylon and their liberation from it. And in the end of chapter 48, we have the call, come out of Babylon. It was soon to sound forth. We know that the permission was given by the Persian king to Shesh-Bazar, and they did return. As many as wished to do so, they did return to their own city. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth, say ye, the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them to the desert. He caused waters to flow [00:40:05] out of the rock for them. He cleaved the rock also and the waters gushed out. And then the refrain, because of the wickedness of many and the obstinate refusal of many to hear the word of the Lord, there is no peace, saith the Lord to the wicked. Now I feel that it has been necessary for us to see very plainly what the circumstances are. I want to go back for some minutes now to three particular parts which are of great help to us, and in them I trust we may hear the Lord speaking directly to us. There is the one passage which directly speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and certainly it would be one of those things in all the scriptures concerning himself that he spoke [00:41:01] of. But the others are things that were addressed to the piety of the people of God to strengthen them in their day. Would you doubt that although their horizon was earth, and we have realized ourselves since we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost to be a people for heaven with him, would you doubt that while we are on earth all the promises of God to the godly can be taken to ourselves? If in Hebrews the writer can say, the Lord hath said, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee, and then goes on to say, therefore I may boldly say, if the Lord is my helper I will not fear what men shall do to me, that opens the door to all the promises of God of this kind, to the pious and the righteous of his people upon earth. And it's with this particular thought in mind that I direct your attention once again to the latter part of chapter 40. Now I was pointing [00:42:01] out how the real subject here is God's heart. Although his people were in affliction, yet his heart is to them. And especially now that the moment is coming when he calls them to action, then he finds that many of them are unbelieving, and they feel that the Lord has forgotten them, their ways hidden from him. They are faint and weary, but it's to these people that God gives this promise. They that wait upon the Lord. There is a way whereby in faintness and weariness our strength can be renewed. Do you want to know by what means when you are faint and weary you can have new strength from God? Do you want to know how when you feel like not moving a step further in the way, you can mount up with wings as eagles and run and not be weary, you can walk and not

[00:43:04] faint? The promise is this, they that wait upon the Lord shall do these things. And everything comes down really to what kind of a person is this Jehovah upon whom his people are called to wait, to give time to come to him. Well, I use the expression again and again because I don't know anything better. The incomparable majesty manifested in a measure of wisdom and power that absolutely beyond all human thought is represented in these verses in so magnificent and exalted a manner as I suppose appears nowhere else in the Holy Scriptures. We would all do well to learn these expressions because they are the word of God to represent to people here upon earth the [00:44:02] incomparable exaltation and majesty of Jehovah whom his earthly people were privileged to worship and serve, and indeed they are also part of the character and power of the Father who has revealed himself as the same God through our Lord Jesus Christ. A fuller revelation, a revelation of his grace that proposes far greater things since the coming of Christ, a revelation of his love, a revelation that he wants to take us into relationship with himself, but not a witless in the incomparable majesty of his wisdom and power than under his name of Jehovah the God of Israel. Verse 12, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? You take the vast waters of the earth, the waters in all their depths covering the greater part of the globe, and so far as the [00:45:02] Lord is concerned it is as though a man were to take a few drops of water in the palm of his hand and measure them like that. All the waters of the earth, the waters above and below, the Lord can be like a being who measures those waters in the palm of his hand. He comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, and with the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Verse 15, the nations, you think of the 400 millions, is it, of China and something like an equal number of India, all the nations, the mind boggles at the numbers concerned in our day with all the nations.

The nations are like the smallest of the balance. When I was a laboratory worker, this is one of the things on my first days which struck me. Of course, this was a long time ago, and balances in [00:46:03] those days worked very different than what they were in Isaiah's day, although they're very different nowadays. But one of the first things that struck me is, the chemists are already smiling at this, but you could look at the pans of a balance and swing them, and they would not be equal, nothing at all to see. But you restore them to stability and brush the one that appears to be heavier, you can see nothing, but you swing it again and you find that they are indeed balanced. The smallest of the balance, too small to see, yet it has put the balance right to remove it. And all the nations of the world are like the small dust of the balance in the eyes of God. Verse 15, and so it goes on, verse 18, to whom then we liken God, or what likeness will he compare to him? And in this earlier part, it talks about his counsellors. Who were the counsellors of the Lord when he made [00:47:04] all these things and established them all, when he set the stars in their courses? Who were his counsellors? The point is that there were no counsellors, that it's the wisdom of God and the power of God that shine out so uniquely in the creation of all things and the preservation of all things, that there's nothing at all that would possibly happen to the people of God here upon earth that could for a moment stand beside the measureless wisdom and power of that God who's speaking to his people. And yet, in the end, after saying to them, he's like the God who sits as a seat upon the circle of the earth. He says in spite of all this majesty, which you have again in verse 26, lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created all these things. With the unaided eye, you can see the massive content of the heavenly sphere. Who created all these things? Who bringeth [00:48:11] out their host by number? He calleth them all by names in the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power not one faileth. Why is it that the heavenly bodies never go wrong? Why is it that mathematically they preserve absolutely the course that has been set for them? It is because God is strong. It's not simply can be passed off by a law of nature. It is because God, Jehovah, is strong that they are preserved in their courses. And he commands them and they stand to attention when he speaks to them. The God whom Israel was called to worship and the Father whom we worship is a God of incomparable majesty and wisdom

and power. There's no plumbing the depths of that wisdom and that power. And we know there's no plumbing the depths of that compassion and that grace and that love [00:49:03] to his people. Well, they were found faint and weary. Do you feel that your ways hit from the Lord? I'm quite sure that with a small number of Christians together like this there will be some who within a measurable time of this have had the thought creeping into their heart, God has forgotten me. So great are the troubles that have passed over my head and afflicted me. You thought the temptation is encompassing that God has forgotten you. And that's what the Lord says to these people. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, my ways hidden from the Lord? How is it possible that a God who gives such care and maintains with such wisdom and power the heavenly bodies in all their vast number? Our way cannot be hidden from God. My ways hit from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God. And the prophet goes on, hast thou not heard that the [00:50:04] everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary, and there is no searching of his understanding. He cannot be weary, and he cannot forget his people. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increases strength. What a, what a reservoir beyond our highest imagination of renewal, of power, and of strength there in connection with every individual one of the people of God in all ages. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. That indicates that nature, with all its powers at its best, is liable to failure and to decay. It's got neither the wisdom nor the power to maintain [00:51:03] its sense. The youth shall fail, faint and be weary, and the young men shall fail. But here is a point of contact between you and me, and the incomparable majesty and wisdom and power, as well as the compassion and the grace and love of God. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. What does it mean to wait upon the Lord? Well, I suppose it's very plain in the first place that it means give time to him. Give time to linger in his presence, that the impress of all these attributes that belong to him might have time by his grace and his spirit to impress themselves upon us. If we wait in his presence, then I think this will happen. And then of course to wait upon the Lord means to seek his blessing. And in the New Testament we have the particular point put [00:52:01] like this, make our requests all unto him. Well, a God of such wisdom, a God of such knowledge, cannot possibly be ignorant of our requests, but he does invite us to make our requests all unto him. And in the New Testament he promises us his peace, but here he promises that we shall renew our strength. I feel, and you feel, sometimes of all the things that you need is a need for a renewal of strength, the kind of strength that only the Lord can give. That promise is given, and that promise stands tonight. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall have an eagle's view, seeing things down there in their true perspective. They shall run and not be weary, run with endurance the race that before us, looking often at Jesus. And they shall walk and not faint. Now we turn over the pages. [00:53:06] In chapter 42, the first four verses, we have the first of these servant poems. And we're not bringing in the greater scope and depth of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which you will all notice has been pretty well absent from the representations of the Messiah that we've had in the past. It's the majesty of his person as God and man. It's his wisdom and power as the wonderful counselor and the mighty God, which enable him to be the Prince of Peace. But we're now just treading in the vestibule of the scriptures which present to us all that he [00:54:02] would achieve and could only be achieved by his death. But his person, his work, and his character are here displayed. Now we can see that the object of the servant's toil in the setting of the prophets is given us by one word which occurs in practically every verse. Verse 1, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Verse 3, he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. Verse 4, he shall not fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment in the earth. Now we tend to think, of course, of judgment as an outpouring of the wrath of God, either here upon earth or at the great white throne. But of course judgment, in its widest sense, we saw, for example, in the earlier parts of the book, it represents holding the balance fairly and justly, and making sure

that the poor and the widows and the fatherless and the underprivileged have their [00:55:05] rights, which have always been neglected in the world. That was a facet of what is meant by judgment. We know that in the end judgment does include an outpouring of the punishment of God, for the correction of what is evil. But I suppose that a definition which might include all is that judgment means the regulation of human conduct by the will of God. In the Old Testament, the regulation of human conduct by the law of God. In the New Testament, the regulation of human conduct by the Spirit of God, which comes down to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. But judgment, I think, could be—an approach could be made to understand what it means, that the object of this person, so far as this earth is concerned, is that all human conduct should be regulated by the will of God, and that will be to the truest blessing of man. It will [00:56:05] involve social justice, which has never been really seen in the world, and it would also involve the glory of God, because this is what his law was directed to do. Now, this servant is going not to fail or to be discouraged till he has established judgment on the earth. The horizon of the prophets is the earth, and in Christianity we have a far greater and more wonderful horizon, as I've said, being joined to Christ in heaven, and destined to share his heavenly home and place with the Father. But so far as the earth is concerned, and the prophets' horizon, then the servant must come to set judgment. Now his character is given in negatives. Verse 2, he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. That's the first one. Verse 3, a bruised reed shall he not break. That's the second one. And the smoking flax shall he not [00:57:08] quench. This is the third one. And they're very wonderful indeed. Then, in order to bring about such a result, with the earth filled with violence and corruption, then hostile men and nations are going to have to be ridden over and brought low. The lofty looks of men shall be brought low in those days. And the strength, which is divine strength, will be needed to overcome and to put away what is evil. But when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared here upon earth, then we read that this was fulfilled in him. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. I think one of the most striking indications of what this means is in the end of 2nd Timothy.

[00:58:06] Because we shall find that although Israel, as the servant of the Lord, has to be displaced, yet we'll find in the end of the book that the Israelites are again called the servants of the Lord. And we find in Christianity that we are called, we have the privilege of being called the servants of the Lord. But in verse 24 of 2nd Timothy, chapter 2, these words occur. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach patient.

Now, of course, this is one of those ways in which we have to compare Scripture with Scripture. We do have to strive and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered for the saints. There is one sense in which there must be, with the help of God and the power of his Spirit, a striving, [00:59:04] a contending for the faith. But the manner of that contending is not to be the strident calls that shriek across the world in the headlines. No, the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach patient. This is the representation of that great servant of the Lord. In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance, the acknowledging of the truth. The point is that it is not anything else than the power of the Spirit of God that can bring about the change the servant of God requires to bring forth. And it is this, not striving, and being gentle unto all men, and patient, which is indicated in this character, he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, these words were quoted of him, and they were shown by him. A bruised reed shall he not break. The idea of the reed, I mean the [01:00:10] original word which is translated reed, is something which betokens basically a straight, tender growth. An upright, straight, tender growth. But as we have it here, the foot of man or beast has ruthlessly crushed it. It's a broken reed. It's bruised, it's not broken, it's a bruised reed, ready to be broken. But we hear of this, the Lord Jesus Christ, that when a reed is bruised, he

does not break it. How often do we feel, although brought by the Lord to be that upright growth, yet so fragile are we in every way that we can easily be bruised [01:01:04] by the ruthless cruelty or thoughtlessness of others around us. But we have to do with one who binds up in these circumstances, and he will not break the bruised reed. The smoking flax shall he not quench. Well, in the lives of the people of God, there are always moments when, according to all human sight, the temper of a touch means all, the difference between extinguishing and being brought again to flame. Simon Peter is surely the best example. After he had denied the Lord with oaths and cursing, surely he was a smoking flax, to all appearances, on the very edge of extinguishing altogether. But the servant of the Lord was his master. The servant of the Lord was for him the tender shepherd, and the Lord Jesus, seeking him out [01:02:01] with tender and strong words. And the Lord Jesus, by praying for him that his faith did not fail, he was restored again, and the flame of his love and devotion and witness brightened again. Why? Because he had to do with a master who will not quench the smoking flax. The Authorized Version obscures a very striking statement here in verse 4. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged. Now, if we were to translate that, translating the same words as we have in verse 3, we would say like this. He shall not burn low or be bruised. The Lord Jesus Christ is one who, though he was meek and lowly, and though he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, there was never any [01:03:05] question with him that he would be bruised in the sense of being near to being broken, nor would he burn dim in the sense of appearing to be extinguished. He will never, he shall not be bruised, and he shall not burn low. This is a wonderful element in the character of our Saviour. So far as earthly masters and kings and friends are concerned, it's very often only the weak who themselves can show sympathy with the weak. The strong are often devoid of sympathy for the weak, but our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the mighty God. He is the one who holds all power in his hand. He is the one who will certainly set judgment in the earth, but he is the one who has [01:04:02] compassion on the feeble. He's the one who will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. And it's a very wonderful thing that we have contact with such a Saviour before ever we come to speak of the deeper things that the servant of the Lord presents. And finally just one word about verse 2 of chapter 43. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. We have spoken about the experiences of the past, and we've often been called, caused to feel faint and weary, a very frequent experience. And the heart of the Lord in all ages has looked down with sympathy and comfort and strength upon these feelings of [01:05:01] his people. But we also have the promises for the future. And this verse, which is given to describe the Lord's strength for his people in that terrifying journey back from Babylon to their own land and to their own city, when they're, if even if they came to pass through the waters or through the fire, then they would not be harmed because he would be with them. And that promise is for us. Whatever, if the Lord tarry, may be the experiences that lie ahead for us, then we have this promise that when we pass through the waters, he will be with us. When we pass through the fire, they shall not kindle upon us, for we have the Lord Jesus Christ who has said on the part of God, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, and therefore also we can boldly say, I will not fear. Now let us sing number 174. Oh, fix our earnest gaze so wholly, Lord, on thee, [01:06:09] that with thy beauty occupied we elsewhere none may see. Number 174.