



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 40:1-31

“The Comfort of Israel’s Incomparable God”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee and we give Thee praise for the privilege that is ours. We thank Thee for the word of God we thank Thee for the stability of it the certainty of it and the eternity of it. We thank Thee that the grass may wither, the flowers may fade, but the word of the Lord stands forever. And we ask Lord that we may give ourselves to the study of it and to the meditation upon it that will lead to our sanctification and our growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Redeemer and coming Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. We give Thee thanks for him, for that part of his work that is finished and for then the unfinished work of High Priest and advocate and especially his coming again and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. We give the thanks for the time tonight, not only in this hour but in the hours that follow. May our Savior’s name be lifted up and honored and glorified. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] We are studying the messianic prophecies of the Book of Isaiah and of course in one sense we might start at chapter 1 and consider all of the chapters of Isaiah because almost all of them touch upon the Messianic ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the aim of our time of study is to center attention on the leading Messianic prophecies and so we’ve considered some of those leading prophecies in the first part of the book,

and now we’re turning to the last half of the book tonight and beginning a study of the prophecies contained in chapters 40 through 66.

I would imagine that almost anyone who has studied the Prophecy of Isaiah would say that the greatest number of the Messianic prophecies and probably the richest of all of the Messianic prophecies when one thinks of Isaiah 52 and 53 are found here in the later part of the book. Remember, Isaiah is divided into two parts; there are thirty-nine chapters and then twenty-seven like the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven of the new. There are thirty-five or six chapters of prophetic material and then a historical section and finally another prophetic section that begins with chapter 40 and does not conclude until the end of the book.

I also would imagine that if you were to ask any serious, and I mean serious in the sense of one who’s studied intensively this book, any serious student of the prophecy of Isaiah, he would say that these last twenty-seven chapters contain the highest mountain peaks of prophecy found in the whole of the Old Testament. Someone has called this last part of the Book of Isaiah the New Testament within the Old Testament. And it has also been called the Old Testament Book of Romans. One thing we do know is that the prophet soars to use his own figure which he uses here in this 40th chapter with wings like eagles.

The theme of these chapters is the good news of divine deliverance centering in this clarion cry given in the 9th verse, “Behold, your God.” So the prophet’s primary aim is to set out before Judah and Jerusalem the coming of their redeeming God. The appeal of this chapter naturally is to repent because Israel and Judah have been sent off into captivity as a result of their sins. And if the prophet speaks as a pure prophet, he’s speaking of what is going to happen. If he speaks from the standpoint of the period of time when they were in captivity, then of course he is talking about the deliverance that is to come from Babylon.

The chapter divisions in this last part of the book are very simple. Beginning at chapter 40 and going through the 48th chapter, we have the termination of the Babylonian affliction. And notice how the last verse of the 48th chapter concludes, “There is no peace saith the Lord unto the wicked.” So the nine chapters then conclude with that statement. Then the next section that begins in chapter 49 and verse 1 goes through chapter 57 and verse 21 and notice how that chapter concludes, “There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.” And then the final section is from chapter 58 and verse 1 through chapter 66 and verse 24 where we have an ending which is very similar in sense to the ending there, “And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me for their worm shall not die neither shall their fire be quenched and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” In other words, there is no peace saith my God to the wicked. So the termination of the Babylonian affliction in the first nine chapters of this last twenty-seven chapter section then in that central section the expiation of the guilt of the nation by the Suffering Servant of Jehovah and the climax is in Isaiah 52:13 and through 53:12. In fact the central portion of that section is found right there in Isaiah chapter 53 and verse, I believe I didn’t bother to check this ahead of time, but I think the central part of the last section of the book is found in the statement in verse 6, “All we like sheep have gone astray we’ve turned every one to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Beginning in chapter 58 then and going to the end of the book, the third of these three nine chapter divisions of the last part of the book, we have the exaltation of the Nation Israel and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. In fact, some have sought to see all three parts of this in verse 2 of chapter 40, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: that she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” And those last three statements, that her warfare is accomplished, that’s the termination of the Babylonian affliction that her iniquity is pardoned, that’s the expiation of her guilt by the Suffering Servant of

Jehovah, and then that she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for her sins refers to the exaltation of Israel and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. That is the opinion of some commentators, but not of all, so I don’t want to express that to you as if we are certain that that is what is taught. I rather think that it is probably not.

The historical background of these chapters is the Babylonian captivity. Now of course, Isaiah did not live during that time, this is one of the reasons why some students of Isaiah insist that the author of the later part of the book is not the same as the author of the first part of the book. And so when you read commentaries on Isaiah written by liberal theologians or contemporary theologians, you’ll often find them referring to Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Now Deutero-Isaiah is an unknown prophet who is responsible for the later part of the book because it seems clearly written from the standpoint of the Babylonian Captivity and Isaiah of course ministered much earlier than that. So we have Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. And in fact, some commentators have three Isaiah’s and so you have Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah. And I imagine there’s probably some young man right now writing a thesis on an Old Testament subject related to this and he’s going to come up with probably Quarto and so on Isaiah and get a PhD. Degree because he’s doing something original in the study of the Book of Isaiah. But of course to get someone to believe that’s another matter.

At any rate, if we acknowledge that the prophet is really a prophet, then it’s not really impossible for him to plant himself in the midst of the time a hundred or so years later on when Israel would be in captivity in Babylon because God had been warning them about this and to write from that perspective. Writing as the Holy Spirit gives him information. It has been the views of the orthodox that Isaiah was a true prophet and that he was given this message by the Holy Spirit who set him in the context of the Babylonian captivity. And against the background of deliverance from that captivity gave him these magnificent promises of deliverance for the nation and ultimately the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth and not simply the deliverance from

the Babylonian captivity. So that’s the viewpoint that we will take and we of course are interested in what men say when they study the Prophecy of Isaiah, but often the explanations of the critics are not totally convincing.

Let’s look now at the 40th chapter and the subject for tonight is, “The Comfort of Israel’s Incomparable God.” The first two verses form something of a prologue of the prologue. For the prologue is really the 3rd verse through the 11th verse. But verse 1 and verse 2 is something of a prologue of the prologue. Only voices are heard in the prologue. They break the night of God’s discipline of his people and the prophets in verse 1 and verse 2 and the people verse 3 and following are addressed. Now one thing I think that we need to bear in mind when we read the prophets is this, they were writing primarily for a theocratic nation. Many of the things that pertain to Israel do not pertain to us. One of the great mistakes I think that we often make is to apply the Scriptures of the Old Testament to us directly, failing to remember that Israel was a theocratic nation. God was their king. Their prophets and their king all labored under God, they were God’s representatives and so the nation was regarded as a divinely led and directed people. The United States is not a theocratic nation. It has never been a theocratic nation and consequently we must learn to distinguish between Israel and the nations of the earth now. Now let me hasten to say that you cannot escape the laws of God by saying we’re not a theocratic nation. We are still subject to the ultimate authority of the word of God; if we recognize that we were a nation that we ought to be under God, well then of course we’d probably be a much better nation. But we must not confuse Israel with our country and particularly in the way that we apply the laws of this land.

Now what I’m leading to is this, with the Nation Israel, there was never a separation of religion and politics. Politics was always religious politics and religion was always intertwined or entwined with politics because the king was the representative of the Lord God. And so consequently in the exercise of his kingly duties, he was to do it under God. Now that is important for us to remember and we will see from time to time

how that pertains to the nation. Israel incidentally is still a theocratic nation. Now they are still responsible to the Lord God Yahweh. And the time is coming in the future when of course that relationship that they bear to him will be fully manifested in the earth. And so Isaiah writes in the light of that.

The prophecy incidentally, is not anonymous because in the very first verse we read, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God.” So the prophet speaks for Yahweh. And he speaks to Israel for they are his people. Now the first voice that we hear is the voice of redemption. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished.” That’s a magnificently intimate expression, when he says, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,” it is literally “speak up against the heart.” Like the German expression, “und das herz,” or the Scottish expression, “it cannot ruin my heart” or sometimes we in English use an expression like “speak home to the heart.” So it’s an attempt on the part of God to have an intimate voice from them. It was a word, a kind of expression that was used often of one man wooing a woman. It was used for example in Genesis chapter 34 in that sense. And in that particular chapter Genesis 34 and verse 23 you may remember it as an incident in which a tragedy occurred, but in the midst of the language of it, we have these words, did I say 34:23? I meant 34:3, in 34:3; I think I meant that, we read, “And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, (this is Dinah) he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.” Now that’s the precise expression, “He spake kindly unto her.” Then in the 50th chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is used there of Joseph speaking to his brethren. So it is a very intimate expression and Israel has been in captivity, she’s been under divine discipline and now she’s going to be given some magnificent promises from the Lord God.

First of all he says, “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and say that her warfare is accomplished that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord’s hand

double for her sins.” That’s an expression incidentally that’s not designed to express that she’s received more than she should have received. It’s an expression that means she’s received everything that she ought to have received. In other words, her suffering is equivalent to her sins, so that now has been paid for and the Lord is going on to the positive salvation that is referred to and the prologue itself begins in verse 3,

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway of our God. (The fourth verse) Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”

So here is a remarkable vista that is opened up for the nation, her time of discipline is over and the voice of God comes with a magnificent prophecy of the coming of the King and the manifestation of the glory of the Lord. Now we know from the New Testament that that 3rd verse has application to John the Baptist. For when John the Baptist appeared on the scene, this is the text that is cited with reference to him. One may turn to either Matthew or Mark in the opening of the gospels and note that fact. In Mathew chapter 3 and verse 5 we read, “And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about him” I’m reading the wrong verse again, drop, you know the elders have been so nice to me, they put this light up here, this is the first night it’s here. They thought that I would be able to see the Bible a little better, but the glare of so much light for us whose eyes are so good you know is bad so [Laughter] anyway, the 3rd verse is the verse I wanted to cite, “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” So the ambassador

of the King, the ambassador of Jehovah is John the Baptist. And Isaiah is given words that apply to him. There may be a further fulfillment in the future as the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus takes place. But our Lord and also the gospel writers make a primary application of that text to the ministry of John the Baptist. He was the ambassador of the King to announce the fact that the King was at hand.

God was in a sense, giving Israel every opportunity, every help in the understanding of the Scriptures so that they would recognize the history of salvation and how it was reaching one of its important climaxes in the coming of John the Baptist. Remember his message was, “Repent for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand.” And now Isaiah has said, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” That by the way is a reference to the practice in those days of constructing roads for a king who would come to a village or a city in perhaps a place where he had not come before. They frequently in order to honor the king would construct an entirely new road so he would come on a road or a highway that had never been used that was designed to honor him in his coming and this is the reference of the words.

Now we read on in verse 6 through verse 8 and hear another voice, but this time the voice of man’s sin, and the voice that there is no hope in anything but the word of God. Listen in verse 6,

“The voice said, Cry. And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: (or the breath of the Lord bloweth upon it) surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Now that of course is designed to stress the fact that Adam’s sin has turned the world into a vast cemetery. Isn’t it striking that men can be so blind about spiritual things that they never realize though there is evidence on every hand in every family in every newspaper that you read, that man is a sinner? And yet the world does not recognize it. That is how blind we are concerning spiritual things, the whole world one vast cemetery. But Isaiah as well as all of the prophets and our Lord lay stress upon the fact that while everything is changeable and all come and go passing off the earthly scene. If our Lord does not come, you will pass off of this earthly scene and of course I will, but there is one thing that abides. He says, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth but the word of our God shall stand forever.”

There is an old story about Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Calvinist preacher who was in his pulpit once and he carried into the pulpit several books and in the midst of his message, at an appropriate time he lifted up one of the books and he spoke of it as one of the outstanding books of literature. Then he pulled out another book which he said was one of the outstanding books of philosophy in that day. And then he pulled up still another book and he said this is one of the outstanding works on the politics of our day. And then he dropped them by the side of the pulpit and said, “They shall pass away.” And then he reached down and he had a giant pulpit Bible on the pulpit and he reached down and he took both arms and pulled up the pulpit Bible and cried out in loud voice, “The word of our Lord shall stand forever!” It was his vivid way of expressing the permanence of the word of God. Isaiah puts it very plainly and beautifully, “The word of our God shall stand forever.”

In the light of that fact, is it not strange that we do not pay much attention to the word of God? Have you ever noticed among Christians when they have come to faith in Christ, very often one of the first things they do is go out and buy a Bible? “Sometimes they don’t have to buy a Bible, sometimes the Christians whom they know who have prayed for them are so happy to see them come to Christ they buy them a Bible. And

isn't it a striking thing that as you grow in your Christian life, supposedly the Bible becomes less and less our food. That is very strange. I imagine that every one of you if given opportunity could give testimony to the fact that they find it very difficult to feed upon the word of God. You read a lot of things, but to feed on the word of God, that's something else. We fail so often to go on acquiring further knowledge of the word of God and growing in the knowledge of it.

The Bible is likened illustratively to the manna of the Old Testament, that upon which Israel fed as they went through the wilderness. It came every day, they were to eat the manna every day, and then on Friday, before the Saturday, they would take a double portion and on the Sabbath day, they were not of course to collect the manna, but rather to eat the manna that they had kept for that day. But Moses says now, “Do not lay aside the manna on any of those other days” because if you do not eat the manna on the day on which you have gathered it and seek to set it aside and preserve it for the next day, they discovered that on those other days of the week, it “bred worms and stank” so the Authorized Version says. What they were being taught was it was necessary for them to feed upon the heavenly food every day. It should be fresh.

Now the word of God lives forever. This is the manna. You can keep your Bible and never pay any attention to it, and you'll discover that those truths that really meant something to you and made you vigorous and an excited Christian in your early days and you will find that the spiritual equivalent of breeding worms and stinking will take place. And the things that thrilled you before will no longer thrill you. Well I don't want to spend too much time on that but I can look back over the Christian movements and see this evidenced. In various movements in which some partial truth was recovered and there was a lot of excitement and then certain tendencies enter in and soon everything is directed toward the preserving of the little bit of truth that may have been recovered and pretty soon the movement is dead because the manna is not freshly gathered. But some little creed or some little aspect of truth is made the truth above all the other truths, I

won’t name names, you can think of church history yourself and think of the things that illustrate that point. We need to feed upon the word of God day by day and continue to grow in the study of the word. We will never be the kinds of Christians that we ought to be if we do not study the word of God.

Sometime ago I read a little statement about two texts in Scripture that were put together which I had never noticed put together. And they illustrate the fact that you ought not to follow the crowd. We should not follow the crowd. We should actually study our Scriptures and grow in the knowledge of them. But you may remember that when Paul was in Ephesus, and things were being stirred up, then the crowd roared for the space of two hours Luke says, “Great is Dianna of the Ephesians, Great is Dianna of the Ephesians!” And then the town clerk referring to the religion that held up Dianna of the Ephesians in the midst of some comments spoke about the truth as he understood it as, “These things that cannot be spoken against.” And then we read that when Paul was in Rome that some Jews came to him and said they’d like to hear what he was saying because this sect of which he was a part was every where spoken against. Isn’t that interesting? The truth spoken against everywhere, but it’s the truth. And then the truth of Dianna of the Ephesians, no one can speak against that, but who even knows what Dianna’s religion was today? The Bible and those who hold to the Bible may be spoken against; the doctrine to which you hold may be spoken against. I’m sure that there have been a few people that have spoken against some of the things that I believe in. That doesn’t disturb me, the apostles had their truth and it was spoken against. Our Lord’s truth was spoken against. I’ve often felt you cannot really be preaching the truth of the Bible if it’s not spoken against. Well, the Word of the Lord abides forever.

Now the voice of evangelization follows in verse 9 through verse 11, the prophet writes,

“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! (Climb the highest mountain Zion and shout Behold your God! I can imagine a person in this kind of situation putting himself in it and he hears the word Behold your God and he looks to see what kind of god it is that the prophet is talking about and what does he discover? Well the 10th verse reads,) Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

So the prophet says climb up to the highest mountains and shout out, “Judah behold your God!” And Judah looks and sees a shepherd. That’s the kind of God Judah has, a shepherd God. One who gathers his lambs with his arms. That of course is a reference to the nation, the Nation Israel and Judah. He gathers his lambs with his arm, he carries them in his bosom, he shall gently lead those that are with young. Our God is a shepherd Isaiah would say. And those in Israel that had some idea of the truth would say, “Hallelujah, we have a God who is a shepherd.”

Now when we come over into the New Testament and we read about the Gentiles who’ve been brought into the family of God into the people of God and we read about this God that we worship, what do we read about him? Well he’s a shepherd. “I am the good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep.” “I am the chief shepherd and I reward those under-shepherds.” “I’m the great shepherd and it’s my task to complete the work of salvation which I have begun.” That’s one of the greatest of all the figures of the word of God, and here we have it about the shepherd God of Isaiah.

Well now he will show what kind of God this God is, whose appearance will redeem Israel, this incomparable God. This in a sense is the sunrise of the last part of the

Book of Isaiah, and one can see Isaiah’s Gospel beginning to appear. He will address his comments to two classes of people. First of all, he will address Israel and for them he reviews the past, and then he will address the Gentiles in the next chapter. We will not be able to study that chapter because we want to go on to the Suffering Servant of Jehovah sections. But for them he previews the future.

Now he speaks to the idolatrous Jews first and then he speaks to the despondent Jews in the remainder of this chapter. And so let’s take a look at it, we’ll just go down rather rapidly because time runs in our forty-five minutes. The tenor is the tenor of challenge and sarcasm. Sections end in questions verse 18, “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” And then in verse 21, “Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?” And then in verse 25, “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One.”

So first of all, verse 12 through verse 25, he speaks to the idolatrous Jews. And he will challenge them, and he will challenge them in a rather sarcastic way. Because you see, they have been enamored of the worship of idols. So he will speak of God’s glory in nature and history first in verses 12 through 18 and let me read these verses,

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, (Incidentally, the span is the distance between the little finger and the thumb, so he’s speaking of this particular space) Who hath meted out Heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counselor hath taught him? (Paul studied that text, because he cites it in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 16, he read and studied the word of God, that apostle did. That may have been one of the reasons he was used as he was.) With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge,

and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?”

Now you if you will study through those verses you will see he moves from God the Creator to God the Governor and he said, Look the whole of the universe can be put on my hand or put on the divine scales, that’s how big I am and how little the things that you consider to be big are. So he talks about God’s glory in nature and history. We know in the New Testament that it is the Lord Jesus Christ that is the architect of this universe and who is moving all things to the certain conclusion set out in the word of God. But then he turns to contrast the greatness of his God with the idols that they worship. Now here we have words dripping with sarcasm. If you do not think that sarcasm is a divine instrumentality, just read these verses, and remember that’s it’s possible for us to be idolatrous in the twentieth century too. He says,

“The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; (I’d like to know what that one is.) he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, (now notice) that shall not be moved.

Ah, what an ironic sarcastic thing that is, for that’s characteristic of the idols, they can be moved. Ever seen an idol? Of course you’ve seen an idol, have you ever noticed how they are made? They generally are made with the weight of the idol at the bottom so it’ll not topple over. That’s the god that they had. He’s a god that has to be carried

along. Later on in this prophet in the 46th chapter will say, “The difference between those idols is that they have to be carried, I carry you.” You carry your idols, but I carried you. Why do you worship something that you have to carry and you have to keep in an upright position? They cannot even be moved, they cannot walk, they’re idols. But we can be just as disobedient to the Lord God as they.

“It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That maketh the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.”

Well now he is going back again to speak about God’s glory in nature and history after speaking about the idols. I should have said something about the idols that I think is sometimes overlooked, and just a sentence or two concerning it. When one reads the history of the Reformation and particularly in the Scottish Reformation, you will often read of historians who will comment upon the fact that this is designed the Scottish Reformation and also the Reformation in other areas too, but the Scots were particularly adept at doing this. The Scottish reformers and the people who followed the Scottish reformers, the reformers themselves as a general rule did not go out of their way to do this, but when they came to the truth of the reformation that a man was justified by faith apart from the sacraments of the church, what they did often was to go into the churches which were thought by people to be magnificent cathedrals, and they would go in and they would shatter the inside of the cathedral, destroying the idols and other works of art.

And then they’re often criticized as being individuals who had no art appreciation. Well true, they hadn’t taken the course at Southern Methodist University in Art Appreciation, but they had something that was far better than that kind of art appreciation. What they appreciated was the nature of the genuine God and they saw those things as attacks on the nature of the incorruptible God. Actually, their thoughts

were much higher than those who constructed those beautiful material things because they were thinking of the immaterial or spiritual nature of the incorruptible God. And what they did manifested a higher understanding of reality than those who criticize them for destroying the objects of art. One only has to think about it for a few moments to realize why they did what they did. And when a person criticizes them, he only indicates that he doesn’t understand the logic of idolatry. And what idolatry does is to bring the incorruptible God down and represent him by a corruptible image. It’s a blatant attack upon the nature of God. I can understand fully why the Lord Jehovah was so angry with the idolaters and why also in the New Testament the apostles felt the same way about idolatry, it’s an attack on the nature and being of God. So these last words are harsh words, but they are good words.

Now in verse 22 through verse 25, he sets out God’s glory in nature and history and I want to come just to those last few verses in which he speaks to the despondent Jews in the last few verses of the chapter, he says, now here he is going to lift their eyes from the earthly idols to the stars, to shepherd them, not to shame them, but to shepherd them, to ask them to look on beyond the stars to him who has made the stars and to recognize what he can do for them. Verse 26, here is the imperative, “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.” He talks about the stars that are in the heavens, and incidentally, he probably has put himself out on the Babylonian plains which were flat and when you’re on the Babylonian plains, it’s kind of like, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, lest some uncircumcised Yankee should be here, but it is like West Texas, flat as a pancake. So it would be natural for an individual if he wants to see something to look up instead of out. And so he says, look at the stars.

And then we have the interrogative in verse 27.) 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?” That is the justice due to me is passed away. So, just as the stars speak of order, of unfailing guidance, as surely as they are preserved and follow the directions of the creative God, so their great shepherd cares for them. He’s the shepherd of the stars and he’s the shepherd also of those who are his.

And finally, the hortative comes in the last few verses and he says,

“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard 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 increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the LORD”

Now this is the sixth point of Calvinism. The sixth point of Calvinism, you remember, total depravity, unconditional election, definite atonement, particular redemption, called limited atonement by some falsely, because Arminians limit the atonement as well, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints. The sixth point is the perseverance of God, and this is it. It’s what Paul talks about when he says, “Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Christ.” It’s “Oh love that will not let me go.” So someone has said, this is Old Testament dialect, “They that wait upon the Lord.” Old Testament dialect for what in the New Testament phraseology is meant by, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “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.”

It’s often been said that the prophet probably got things out of order here, you know you should say that you walk and then you run and then you fly. But he’s turned it around and he talks about those that wait upon the Lord renewing their strength and they shall mount up with wings as eagles, fly, they shall run not be weary and then walk. So

we have flying and running and then walking. And in fact some contemporary scholars are so certain that Isaiah had it wrong that they’ve devised means by which to modify the text itself in order to set our their ideas. Well, Isaiah’s not speaking about the things that we’re talking about. I think that probably he’s talking about the stages of a man’s life. When we’re young, we do fly. But as we grow older, well we run some, but when we grow very old we walk. But we have the assurance that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and he will be with us through the flying through the running and through the running because he is Israel’s incomparable God and ours too. That’s a great chapter; it’s an introduction to the great part of Isaiah prophecy. Now I’ve kept you about five minutes overtime tonight, I’ll try to repent and not do that next week. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this magnificent chapter, for what it teaches us concerning Thee. Oh God, help us to remember the word shall always stand, and enable us ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]