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Isaiah 49:1 - 52:12



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah 49:1-52:12 is divided into three sections of nine chapters each, with the first servant song not lying within the section covered in this talk. The speaker discusses the subtle nature of the servant's descriptions and how they resemble Christ, despite some denying that the servant is the Messiah. The talk covers topics such as trusting God, the new heaven and earth, and growing in holiness.

Transcript

The last 27 chapters of Isaiah are divided into three sections of equal length, as we have observed, nine chapters each. We were looking at the first of those segments, the first nine chapters, chapter 40-48, in our last session, and pointing out how it is dominated by certain recurring themes, the foolishness of worshiping idols, the contrast between Yahweh and the idols, in at least three important ways that he keeps reiterating. One is that he's the only God.

Secondly, that he is the creator God. And thirdly, that he's an intervening God, a God who actually sovereignly does what he wishes to do, and he'll even tell you in advance what it is. And no idols can do that.

We come now to chapters 49 and following, up through chapter 57. This is the next nine chapters. And these chapters are dominated primarily with what we have called the servant songs.

We had a topical lecture on the servant of Yahweh and saw that there are four generally recognized servant songs in Isaiah. And the servant, as we saw when we talked about this topically, initially the servant appears to be Israel. Israel collectively seen as a person, a witness, a messenger, serving God to bear witness to God, the nation as a whole.

So that he says, Jacob, you are my servant, Israel, whom I've chosen repeatedly, by the way. And yet we find this anomaly that some of the servant songs begin to speak of the servant as one who will actually do something to restore Israel, to do something for Israel, and thus distinguishing the servant from Israel. And in those passages, Christians

have come to see Christ as the servant of Yahweh.

And the New Testament writers quoted quite often from these servant songs and just assumed that they were about the Messiah. There has been some controversy as to whether the Jews, apart from Christian influence, saw the servant songs as pertaining to the Messiah or not. But there is some evidence that the rabbis had begun even before the time of Christ to apply some of these servant songs to the Messiah that they expected to come.

And therefore, when the apostles applied them to Jesus, they were not doing something that innovative. They were actually following sort of a trend that had already come to be understood by the Jewish teachers, that this servant is not always the nation of Israel, but is in fact the Messiah. Modern Jewish teachers usually deny this.

And one reason for that is that the descriptions of the servant that most resemble Christ do so powerfully that in order to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, many Jewish rabbis today and thinkers would say, well, the servant is not the Messiah. And they say that in order to say that it's not Jesus, of course. But it would appear that before the time of Christ, rabbis did associate the servant songs, some of them at least, with the Messiah.

And the idea seems to be that Israel is the servant initially God has chosen historically prior to the coming of Christ. He's given Israel an assignment like a man would give his servant an assignment. However, Israel has been disobedient.

Israel has failed. Israel has not produced the fruit, whatever. And therefore, one must be raised up to be a new Israel, a new servant.

And that servant will have to redeem the old servant, the old Israel, and also extends his influence to the Gentiles. Now, the first of the servant songs does not lie within the section that we're looking at in this session. In this session, we want to focus on chapters 49 through 57.

Mostly, the servant songs are found in this section, with one exception. Back in chapter 42, the previous section, there was the very original servant song, chapter 42, verses 1 through 7. I'd like to look at that again. Now, remember, we did go through these in a topical lecture in this series earlier.

So, I'm going to make much fewer comments now, and we have to cover many chapters in an hour. So, I'm not going to go deeply into these. We're just going to, since we have talked about them separately, we're going to pass over them and see how they fit into the general flow of these chapters.

But, in chapter 42, the first servant song, Behold My Servant, and it's Yahweh speaking, so it's Yahweh's servant, the servant of Yahweh. Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, My elect One, in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him.

He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench.

He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail, nor be discouraged, until He has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands shall wait for His law. Thus says God, Yahweh, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to people on it and spirit to those who walk on it.

I, Yahweh, have called you, apparently the servant He's speaking to, in righteousness, and will hold your hand. I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people and as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. I am, well, we'll just go on.

It talks about, I am Yahweh, that's my name, and so forth. Now, this servant is one who will be a light to the Gentiles. It does not say necessarily in this passage that the servant will minister to Israel, and therefore it leaves open the possibility that one could interpret it as being about Israel, that the servant here is Israel, who God is helping, who will bring justice to the earth, and that is what many rabbis would say the servant is.

In this, they would disagree with the apostles who wrote the New Testament, who actually quoted this section, and it was quoted by Matthew in chapter 12, where he is talking about the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, and he applies this scripture to that season, to that activity. It is in Matthew 12, 15 and following. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew from there, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.

And he warned them not to make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased, and it goes on. And it seems to be focusing, Matthew seems to be focusing on verses 19 and 20 here. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reedy will not break, a smoking flax he will not quench. This because Matthew has just reported that when Jesus healed people, he told them not to tell anyone. That is one of the more peculiar things we encounter in the gospels that raises questions in our mind.

It is not at all self-explanatory why, when Jesus did a miracle of an important sort, usually a healing, he would tell people, don't tell anyone about this. You would think that would be a good thing to tell people about. But we often wonder, why did he do that? Well, Matthew said he did that so that it might fulfill this prophecy.

Well, what was it about this prophecy that that fulfilled? Certainly, most of the verses

that are quoted by Matthew there don't have a direct relation to him telling people not to speak. But when it says he will not quarrel or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets, this as we have it in Isaiah 42, it says he will not cry out or raise his voice, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Certainly, what is being said here by Isaiah is that he will not be trying to get attention to himself.

He is not going out in the public streets and start talking and raising his voice trying to get people's attention. He is more reticent. He is more subtle.

He is more seeking those who will seek him out rather than him going out and confronting the public. You know, we often think of Jesus as a street preacher. In fact, there is a street preacher coalition in the United States.

It has a name. I won't give it. But its headquarters are in the south.

And I used to get their newsletters and things like that. And on their envelopes, they had their slogan. And their slogan was Jesus was a street preacher.

And when I saw that, I thought, was he? Is that what the Bible says? Was Jesus a street preacher? It says actually he will not cry out nor raise his voice nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. We sometimes think of a street preacher as doing something like what Jesus would do. Actually, they are doing something more like probably what the prophets in the Old Testament would do in Israel.

But Jesus didn't do that. Now, he did preach in the open air. But he didn't go out on the street corner and try to arrest people's attention and get and start to in.

He wasn't intruding into their space as they're just trying to go about their business. When Jesus spoke to crowds, it was because they had gathered to hear him. They were the ones requesting to hear from him, not vice versa.

Usually, it's because they'd heard of him by reputation or they had seen a miracle or they wanted to see a miracle. And for whatever reason, they knew of him and came. And he would be crossing the Sea of Galilee trying to get away from the crowds.

But they'd be waiting for him on the other shore. And he'd say, okay, I'll preach to you. I'll do it.

And not like he was reluctant to preach, but there were times when he would have taken his rest. But the people were insistent. We never read that Jesus went out in the street.

And there's people going about their business, walking by to and fro. And he just tries to get their attention. Hey, everyone, could I have your attention? Please listen, I have something to say about the kingdom.

He didn't do that. It's when he saw crowds gathered or when he went to the synagogue

where there were obviously people gathered to hear teaching. When people wanted to be taught, when they wanted to hear what he had to say, he certainly was willing to tell them.

But he didn't just go out in the street and start preaching. He was not, in that sense, a street preacher. And I've seen many street preachers who I wished were not street preachers also.

Because many of them are very annoying. And even the nicest of them often are despised not for their message so much, but for their intrusion into the lives of people who'd rather just be left alone. Now you might say, well, people shouldn't be left alone.

God has a claim upon them. We're supposed to give his message. It's true.

We are supposed to give his message. But Jesus gave his message to people who were interested in hearing it. And perhaps his miracles were done in some ways to help spur that interest.

But even so, even his miracles he didn't want to use just as publicity events. He didn't want to be promoting himself. He wasn't out to get attention.

He was just out to be a servant. And he did get attention, but that wasn't what he was after. He was out in the street lifting up his voice and crying out for attention.

And I think that's what Matthew is saying. When Jesus healed people and told them don't tell anyone, it's sort of his character was not to be self-promoting. His character was not to encourage people who got healed to go out and stir up excitement about him.

He just wanted to go about his servant activities and let his father decide to what degree he'd be promoted or not. So this servant song is in chapter 42. The next one is at the beginning of the section that we come to now.

The section we want to look at begins at chapter 49. And that chapter begins with the second servant song. It says, Listen, O Coastlands, to me and take heed, you peoples from afar.

The Lord has called me from the womb. From the matrix of my mother he has made mention of my name. And he has made my mouth like a sharp sword.

In the shadow of his hand he has hidden me and made me a polished shaft. In his quiver he has hidden me. And he said to me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

Then I said, I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain. Yet surely my just reward is with the Lord and my work is with my God.

And now the Lord says, Who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him so that Israel is gathered to him. For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord and my God shall be my strength. Indeed, he says, It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel.

I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth. Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to the servant of rulers kings shall see and arise. Princes also shall worship because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel.

And he has chosen you. Thus says the Lord in an acceptable time, I have heard you. And in a day of salvation, I have helped you.

I will preserve you and give you as a covenant to the people. Same thing he said back in chapter 42 in the first sermon time. To restore the earth, to cause them to inhabit the desolate heritages, that you may say to the prisoners, Go forth.

And to those who are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed along the roads and the pastors shall be on all desolate heights. Now, a couple of things here are found in the first sermon song also.

Namely, that he would be one who declares liberty to prisoners. That he would be given as a covenant to the people. And that he would reach out to the Gentiles.

In chapter 42, it said that he will not fail nor be discouraged until he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands, which is the regions outside of Israel, the Gentile regions, will wait for his law. Of course, Christ's law, his commandments are being carried to the far lands by the church. And the parts that have not heard yet are waiting to hear.

The coastlands are waiting to hear his law. That we are to teach them to observe all things Jesus commanded to disciple them is the fulfillment of this mission of the servant. In a sense, Jesus is the new Israel.

But in a sense, we are him because we're his body. We're his flesh and his bones. We're his hands and his feet.

Therefore, the new Israel, the new servant is Jesus, which is us. He's the head. We're the body.

And the servant Israel has transferred to the Messiah. And it's his body that carries out the purposes that the original servant was supposed to carry out. Now, we have then this lengthy servant song, after which we see in verses 10, Isaiah 49, 10, involving very

familiar imagery we've seen in a lot of passages about the kingdom age.

They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them. For he who has mercy on them will lead them. Even by the springs of water, he will guide them.

I will make each of my mountains a road and my highways shall be elevated. Surely these shall come from afar. Look, those from the north and the west and these from the land of Sinim.

Sing, O heavens, be joyful, O earth and break out in singing, O mountains. For the Lord has comforted his people and will have mercy on his afflicted. So those who come from the east and the west, I believe is, of course, a reference to the Gentiles coming into the kingdom of God.

And this was something that had already been brought up back in chapter 43, where it says in Isaiah 43, 5 and 6, Fear not, I am with you. I will bring your descendants from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, give them up, and the south, do not keep them back.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Now, God's people are being gathered to him from all directions, from all parts of the world. This is the influx of the Gentiles.

This is a verse I believe that Jesus was alluding to in Luke chapter 13. In Luke chapter 13 and verse 28 and 29, Jesus said, There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves, his Jewish listeners, thrust out. They will come from the east and the west and the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God.

And so, those who are coming from the east and the west and the north and south are the Gentiles, of course, and that is what is referred to in Isaiah 43. I bring your descendants from the east, gather you from the west. I will say to the north, give them up, to the south, do not keep them back.

Bring my sons from afar. So, we saw this back in Isaiah 43. We encounter the same idea in chapter 49 and verse 20.

Now chapter 49 and 14. Now, here, no doubt, the exiles in Babylon are pictured as saying, God has forgotten me here. And he says, No, I haven't forgotten you.

I'm going to gather you back. But in gathering back, of course, we now morph into the ultimate gathering of God's people, Jew and Gentile, into the kingdom of God, into the new Israel, the new Zion. And therefore, he says, all these are going to come from around about to be part of you.

And in verse 19, he says, for your waste and desolate places and the land of your destruction will even now be too small for the inhabitants and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children you will have after you've lost the others will say again in your ears, the place is too small for me. Give me a place where I may dwell.

Then you will say in your heart, who has begotten these for me? Since I have lost my children, I'm desolate, a captive and wandering to and fro. And who has brought these up? There I was left alone. But these, where were they? Thus says the Lord God, behold, I will lift my hand in an oath to the nations, the Gentiles, and set up my standard for the peoples.

And they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried in their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers, queens your nursing mothers, and they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, lick up the dust of your feet, and you will know that I am Yahweh, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for me. Now, he's saying here that when he gathers all these people in, Israel will be too small.

The land of Israel will be too small for all the people that he's going to gather in. Why? Because he's got a global community. It can't all fit within the borders of such a small piece of property.

And therefore, the children that are brought in are figuratively seen as coming to the mother nation and saying, this is too small. We need a bigger place than this. There's too many of us here.

This is too big a family for so small a house. And Israel is going to say, what? Where did these people come from? I had children, but they were all lost in the captivity. Now, where did this multitude come from? Who brought these up? My children were dead.

My children were gone. But where did I get this big family all of a sudden? And he says, well, it's because God calls on the Gentiles. And they're coming in.

Verse 24, shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of the righteous be delivered? But thus says the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away. That is, Babylon was the mighty. Jews were captives.

But also the devil is the mighty, and people are his captives. And therefore, deliverance from both may be in view at the same time, because one is the type of the other. Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away.

The prey of the terrible will be delivered. For I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children. I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine.

All flesh shall know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one

of Jacob. Now, chapter 50 leads us up to, the first few verses lead us up to another servant song. Chapter 50 verses 4 through 9 are considered to be a servant song.

One could, of course, go all the way through verse 11, which is the remainder of the chapter. The first verses are going to fill the gap between where we left off at the end of chapter 4 and 9 and the beginning of the next servant song. It says, Thus says the Lord, Where is the certificate of your mother's divorce whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgression your mother has been put away.

Now, there's some question as to what this rhetorical question means. Where is the certificate of your mother's divorce whom I put away? It sounds like he has given a certificate of divorce and he's put her away. That's divorced her.

Israel, that is. However, the rhetorical question seems to imply, is there such a document available? Where is it? And especially the next line, Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? That is, when I sold you into captivity, was it because I owed somebody something and I had to pay a debt? Of course not. In other words, he seems to be denying that there is such a creditor that he owed.

And he sold them without anyone demanding it of him. It was something he sovereignly decided to do because of what was necessary. It's for your transgressions your mother has been put away.

Sounds like it's saying that I didn't give her a writing of divorcement. She just ran off on her own. Now, later on in Jeremiah, a hundred years later, Jeremiah does say that God has divorced Israel.

And it does sound like God has put her away here, although if the question in verse 1 is merely rhetorical, he may be saying, you think I've forsaken you. Remember back in the previous chapter, verse 14, Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me. My Lord has forgotten me.

He might be saying, really? Where's the evidence of that? Where's the evidence of a divorce? Is there a certificate of divorce around that says that I have put you away? It's not that. It was not I who put you away. It was you.

It was your iniquities that put you away. And he's going to say something a lot like that again over in chapter 55, although I must say the verse number is not readily coming to mind, so we'll just find it when we find it. But he says, Why is it when I came was there no man? Why when I called was there no one to answer? This is Isaiah 50, verse 2. Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? Indeed, with my rebuke I dry up the sea.

I make the rivers a wilderness, and the fish stink because there's no water, and they die

of thirst. An imagery of fish dying of thirst. I think they probably die of something else, but it's just poetic.

I clothe the heavens with blackness. I make sackcloth the covering. If I do all that, you think I can't save you? If I can make the sea vanish by rebuking it, and dry up the sea so the fish are drying up, no one can do that but me.

And if I can do that, why do you think I can't answer you? It's not that my hand is shortened or limited that I cannot redeem. There's something else going on. The Lord has given me... Now this begins a servant song.

The Lord has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning. He awakens my ear to learn as the learned.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. Now this is different than Israel. Israel was rebellious.

Nor did I turn away. I gave my back to those who struck me. My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard.

I did not hide my face from shame and spitting. Any Christian would immediately associate this with Jesus, and I think rightly so. Although, interestingly, the New Testament does not quote this verse as being fulfilled.

Even when it's describing Jesus being abused by the soldiers and things like that, the place where you'd say that it might be fulfilled, and then quote a verse like this, it is not quoted in the New Testament. But nonetheless, we know that the New Testament sees the servant as Christ, and therefore the application is justified. For the Lord God will help me, therefore I will not be disgraced.

Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. Set my face like a flint, a stone. In other words, no one can dissuade me from going on the mission that I've been given.

I'm a faithful servant. I'm going to fulfill my responsibility. That statement, I have set my face like a flint, has a somewhat similar expression to it in Luke chapter 9. And it's a possibility that Luke may have this verse in mind, though it's perhaps not entirely obvious.

It says in Isaiah 9, verse 51, Now it came to pass when the time had come for Jesus to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers before his face, and as they went they entered into the village of Samaritans to prepare for him. But they did not receive him because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

Twice Luke says Jesus' face was set to go and die, really. He set his course. He was not going to be moved from it like a stone.

Now, like a flint, Luke doesn't say. But Isaiah 50, verse 7 says, Therefore I have set my face like a flint. But I have set my face to go the right way is a term that Luke applies to Jesus there when he was going to Jerusalem to die.

Isaiah 50, verse 8, He is near who justifies me. I will who will contend with me. Let us stand together.

Who is my adversary? Let him come near me. Surely the Lord will help me. Who is he who will condemn me? Indeed, they will all grow old like a garment.

The moth will eat them up. Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of his servant? Must be the disciples of Jesus, of course. Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God.

Now, this verse is for Christians who are seemingly in the dark. When you're going through a tunnel. When you're going through a trial and it suddenly seems like the lights are out.

You don't see, you don't feel God. You know, there's that famous expression that some of the old Christian mystics use. The dark night of the soul.

You go through a season, even though you're a Christian, you're in the dark. Doesn't seem right. You're not supposed to be in the dark.

You're supposed to be in the light. You think, but there are paths or places along the path that God gives us that are tunnels. They're testing.

They turn back the faint hearted. They teach people to trust in God without feeling and without, you know, sensate confirmation. And so, these Christians who are servants of, I mean, followers of the servant.

Who listen to the Messiah. Who obey his voice. Sometimes they walk in dark places.

David said, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. That sounds dark. Shadows are dark.

He said, I will fear no evil for you are with me. Well, that's kind of what Isaiah is saying. If you're walking in darkness and you have no light, trust God.

Trust God. Don't trust in your vision and your feelings and all that. Just rely upon God.

That's the thing to do when you're going through a dark spell in your Christian life. The question is, are you obeying the voice of the servant? Those who obey the voice of the

servant can trust God. You see, living by faith just means that you do what God says and trust him with the outcomes.

That's what living by faith is. If things are going badly, the only question you have to ask yourself is, am I obeying God? Am I where God wants me? Is this what the Lord wants me to do? If so, I'll just trust him in it. I don't need any confirmation because his word, his promise, his character is confirmation enough.

I just have to trust him, even if there's nothing else to encourage me, because I know that I'm one of his obedient followers. Therefore, I can rely on him. And verse 11 says, Look, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled, this you shall have from my hand, you shall lie down in torment.

The idea here seems to be, once you are in darkness, there's a couple ways you can go. You can either just trust God or you can try to settle the matter yourself, build your own fire. Try to find your own way out of the darkness, as it were.

The darkness is a problem. It's a problem in which you can trust God if you're an obedient servant of his, but if you're impatient and you can't trust God, you don't want the darkness. You try to resolve the problem.

You make sparks. You make a fire. Try to provide yourself some light.

And he says, go ahead. Do it. Walk in the light of your own fire if you want to.

But then you're not trusting God and you'll have your torment. Your fires, your own devices cannot really solve your trials. If God is testing you, if God has you going through a dark spell, then just trust him until it's over.

The tunnel has an end. You'll be out in the light again eventually if you keep moving forward. But if you kind of just say, well, obeying God is something I'm going to put on hold until I get this fire lit, then I'll just have to take care of myself here.

I'll have to provide my own light and my own needs. Well, if that's the choice you make, you will be sorry. Now, Chapter 51 is perhaps the first chapter we come to that doesn't actually have a servant song in it, but it does have messianic age descriptions.

In fact, that's what essentially the whole chapter is about. Listen to me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek Yahweh. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and the hole of the pit from which you were dug.

Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who bore you. For I called him alone and blessed him and increased him. God may make you walk alone, but that's how Abraham was.

Look to him as an example for your encouragement. The source of God's people was in Abraham, the earthly source, the human source. And he was called alone, but God took care of him.

God blessed him and increased him. He didn't have the support of a community even. For the Lord will comfort Zion.

He will comfort her all her waste places. He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in it.

Thanksgiving in the voice of melody. Listen to me, my people, and give ear to me, O my nation. For law will proceed from me, and I will make my justice rest as the light of the peoples.

My righteousness is near. My salvation has gone forth, and my arms will judge the peoples. The coastlands will wait upon me, and on my arm they will trust.

It certainly sounds like it's the servant speaking because of the things that are said. The coastlands will wait upon him and things like that. He's going to be a light to the peoples.

Those are all things that were said about the servant in earlier passages. Though the speaker seems to be Yahweh. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath.

For the heavens will vanish away like smoke. The earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner. But my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will not be abolished.

Now he talks about the heavens vanishing away like smoke and the earth growing old like a garment. This may be poetic language just like the Garden of Eden and the wilderness and all those things are poetic language. Some feel that the passing of the heavens and earth alluded to here is a symbol for the passing of the old order when the new order has come.

In other words, that transition we read of in the first century when Christ brings the new covenant and then the Romans take away the old covenant, as it were, by destroying the temple. That that is the passing away of the old creation, the old heavens and the earth. Remember Paul said if anyone is in Christ, what is he? He is a new creation.

Old things are passed away. All things become new. Isaiah will have more to say later in these later chapters about the passing away of the heavens and the earth and the creation of new heavens and new earth.

And there is some reason to believe that when he discusses that, he is talking about the passing of the old order and bringing in the new order, the new creation in Christ as

opposed to talking about the literal end of the cosmos and the creation of the new heavens and new earth. This fact has led some people to believe that the New Testament references to new heaven and new earth must necessarily not be talking about the end of the world and the end of the cosmos, but simply of the 70 AD transition when the old order disappears and the new order continues. That is a reasonable thought.

If Isaiah is using these terms to speak figuratively of those things, then maybe Peter in 2 Peter 3 and maybe Revelation 21 is doing the same thing. Maybe these are passages about the passing of the old covenant and the coming of the new covenant. That is a reasonable suggestion except for the fact that the details of Peter and even of Revelation, I think, must be taking the thought beyond what Isaiah is taking it.

Because Paul, without using the language of new heaven and new earth, in Romans 8, talks about how the creation is currently travailing and groaning, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God in the redemption of our body, Paul said, will be the time when the creation itself is delivered from the bondage of decay. Now the creation here must be the natural creation. He talks about how it was subjected to futility by someone else against its wishes.

He seems to be talking about the fall. He seems to be talking about the world. And therefore the creation being renewed, Paul talks about, the most natural way, in fact, it would be extremely unnatural to think he is not talking about the natural creation, the heavens and the earth.

And he says they are going to be renewed. They are going to be delivered from the bondage of decay. That is what we seem to be reading about in Revelation 22, in verse 3, where it says there will be no more curse.

In where? The new heavens and new earth. It seems that Paul anticipates a literal transformation of the creation and that that transformation is the removal of the curse. And that is spoken of in the description of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation.

Which seems to mean, Revelation is talking about the same thing Paul is, I think. Likewise, when Peter talks about new heavens and new earth, he seems to be talking about the literal heavens and earth because he compares it with the flood, how the old earth was wiped out by a flood. But the present heavens and earth, he says, which are since the flood, and that would not be the old covenant because the old covenant was not made with Noah, but the earth that is after the flood, he says, is being reserved by the word of God to be destroyed in fire.

And he said the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will be dissolved and the earth will be burned up and all of that. Now, of course, taken by itself, that language could be apocalyptic imagery of the fall of Jerusalem, but since it is

in the context of another world judgment like the flood, it sounds like Peter is giving his readers reason to believe there will be another worldwide judgment in fire. And he says in verse 13, 2 Peter 3, 13, and we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and new earth.

So there is some degree of legitimacy in those who say the new heaven and new earth could be the new covenant and not some future cataclysm because that seems to be how Isaiah uses the term. But I believe that the New Testament writers, what they say about it indicates that it's talking about something that is still future, something that is the true end of the world, when heaven and earth will pass away, as Jesus said. This is something that will remain debatable, I'm sure, among people who are trying to sort out how much Isaiah's imagery of the new heavens and new earth is informing the New Testament imagery of the new heavens and new earth.

But here, I think probably, when he talks about the heavens vanishing like smoke and the earth growing old like a garment, it sets us up for what we'll find in Isaiah 65, that there's a new heavens and a new earth. And I believe that there's a good possibility that this is talking about the passing of the old order and the coming of the new order. He says in verse 7, What are you afraid of people for? People are just going to rot.

They're not any better than you in the long run. But God is the one you should be fearing, not them. Again, a reference to Egypt being defeated at the Exodus.

The waters of the great deep that made the depths of the sea erode for the redeemed to cross over. So the ransom of the Lord shall return. So, meaning in the same way, a future deliverance like the Exodus.

The ransom of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighs shall flee away. There's no question this is talking about the Messianic age because this exact same verse is repeated from Isaiah 35.10, which was a whole chapter about the Messianic age.

When he is prepared to destroy. Now this is almost certainly referring to the new heavens and new earth, which I think in this context is the new order, the new creation in Christ. And he has already set us up for that in verse 6, when he talked about the heavens vanishing away and the earth growing old.

Now he's going to plant a new heavens and a new earth. He says, Now I believe that some translations do not put that in the future tense. I think I've read some translations, I don't remember which ones that put it in a different tense.

But that's okay. No issue. The point is he seems to be saying, I intend to bring about a new heavens and a new earth.

That is a new creation. That is a new order, a new covenant order. And then I'll say to

Zion, the new Zion, you're my people.

Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord, the cup of his fury, you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling and drained it out. There is no one to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth, nor is there any who takes her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up. These two things have come upon you.

Who will be sorry for you? Desolation and destruction, famine and sword. By whom will I comfort you? Your sons have fainted. They lie at the head of the streets like the antelope in a net.

They are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of God. Clearly these judgment passages must be a reference to the destruction of the apostates in Jerusalem, which is again linked in context with the planting of a new heavens and new earth, a new order. There is a judgment on the old order.

Therefore please hear this, you afflicted and drunk, but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the Lord and your God, who pleads the cause of his people, See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury. You shall no longer drink it, but I will put it in the hand of those who afflict you, who have said to you, Lie down that we may walk over you.

And you have laid your body like the ground and as the street for those who walk over. So you were persecuted before by these people, but now they're judged. Now the cup of fury is theirs.

They are the ones mentioned in verses 17 through 20. Probably the apostate Jerusalem who did persecute the church in Jerusalem. And so he offers comfort to the faithful, the church there.

Now another prophecy begin with Awake, awake. The first one we saw was in verse 9 of the previous chapter, then verse 17. Now there's another awake, awake.

Chapter 52. Put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you. Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem.

Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Now again, of course, this would be initially taken as a reference to the captives in Babylon, shaking off their bondage and making the pilgrimage back to Zion. But having that as a type and a shadow of messianic salvation.

For thus says the Lord, you have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. Peter's statement that in 1 Peter 1, 18 and 19, that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, no doubt has a verse like this as its precedent. For thus says the Lord, God, my people went down at first into Egypt to sojourn there.

Then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what have I here, says the Lord, that my people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them make them wail, says the Lord. And my name is blasphemed continually every day.

Therefore, my people shall know my name. Therefore, they shall know in that day that I am he who speaks. Behold, it is I. So when he delivers them, they'll know that he really had prophesied of this deliverance because it will have happened.

They'll recognize the prophets had been speaking for God. Now at this point, of course, the gospel is in view because Paul quotes verse 7 over in Romans 10, 15 and Paul alludes to it in Ephesians 6, 15. Ephesians 6, 15 is the passage about the armor of God and he says, having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The preparation of what? The gospel, good news, of peace. Your feet shod. You have shoes on.

And he says here, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings the gospel, good news, who proclaims peace. So we've got the elements of Ephesians 6, 15 here. You've got the feet, you've got the good news, and it's a message of peace.

And so Paul is alluding to that in Ephesians. If you're going to cross mountains carrying this good news, you'll need good footwear. If you're going to march, because it's in the context of armor, it's in the context of an army, armed and moving forward, if you're going to march over mountains, over hill and over dale, you're going to need adequate footwear.

And that's the only thing that will keep your feet pretty. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news and proclaim the message of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things, who proclaim salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns. There's the message right there.

That's the gospel. Your God reigns. There's another king.

There is a king named Jesus. Jesus is Lord. That is the summary of the gospel message.

And Paul, in quoting this verse about the gospel, seemed to agree that this is talking about the gospel that we preach. We cross mountains. We cross deserts.

We cross oceans to proclaim to the world, your God is reigning. There's a kingdom.

There's a king reigning.

There is a Lord. And that is the glad tidings. It is the message of salvation.

Verse 8, your watchmen shall lift up their voices. With their voices they shall sing together, for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion. Not sure what they will see eye to eye means.

We might be inclined to see it the way we use that idiom. They'll be in agreement with each other. We see eye to eye.

But in all likelihood it just means they'll see each other face to face. These people from all over the world will be part of the kingdom of God looking at each other face to face, relating with each other. Break forth into joy.

Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem. For the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart.

Now these previous oracles began, awake, awake. This time it's depart, depart. Go out from there.

Touch no unclean thing. Go out from the midst of her. Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.

For you shall not go out with haste nor by flight. For the Lord will go before you and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. Now, this obviously would be taken by the original readers to be departing from Babylon.

Depart. Go out of there. You who carry the vessels of the Lord.

The priests, of course, who went back to Jerusalem would have to bring from Babylon those vessels of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had captured previously. Cyrus let them go to the storehouses where Nebuchadnezzar had stored those and take them, and take them back to Jerusalem. So, this is a reference at one level of the Babylonian exile Jews going back, taking the vessels of the Lord back so they can build the temple again and furnish it with the original vessels as much as possible.

And he says you're going to go out easily. You're not going to have to run away. You're going to be released.

You're going to be going out, you know, not with haste nor by flight. The Lord's going to go before you. God's opening the door, making this highway in the wilderness for you to get back to Zion.

But, having said that, the New Testament seems to have this passage in mind when it talks about us departing from sin. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, 2 Corinthians 6 is one of the few places that Paul actually lapses into uttering an oracle in his letters. That is, most of the time when Paul talks about God, he talks in the third person about God like all the epistles do, but at one point he speaks as if he is God, like a prophet does.

And he says, first of all, he quotes God in 2 Corinthians 6, 16. Now, God has said this where? Lots of places. There's quite a few places where in the Old Testament, Exodus and Leviticus and Jeremiah and Zechariah, God said essentially this, that he'll dwell among his people, he'll walk among them, they'll be his people and he'll be their God.

But then Paul seems to frame his own oracle in verse 17. Now, this is not an actual quote of any one passage. It seems to be like putting together various passages from the Old Testament.

Have you ever been in a charismatic church where a prophecy is given and it just sounds like a litany of lines from Old Testament prophets? Well, I was in a charismatic church and I was given a prophecy from the Old Testament. I have, many times, I've often thought, that's not a real prophecy, that's just quotations from the Old Testament. But there's a sense in which Paul here is prophesying, he says, thus saith the Lord, and yet what he has here is mainly elements from Old Testament promises but put together as a contemporary oracle for the church.

And one of the scriptures he obviously is alluding to is Isaiah 52, 11, depart, depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing, be clean. So he says, come out from among them, be separate, says the Lord, do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. So this idea of not touching the unclean thing, Paul applies to the Christians.

In what way? We'll look at the next verse. Chapter 7, verse 1, therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. So filthiness of flesh and spirit, we're to cleanse ourselves from.

And that means, of course, living holy, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. So Isaiah's words, depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing, go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord. Do we bear the vessels of the Lord? Absolutely.

We are the vessels of the Lord. God has put this treasure in earthen vessels, and we are the holy things. We are even the stones of his temple.

And so this exhortation to the Jews, apparently, to depart from Babylon, becomes in Paul's usage an exhortation to us to depart from sin, iniquity, filthiness of flesh and spirit. Now, we're going to stop here, and that's not entirely accidental. I would like to have

taken this whole segment in one hour, but I guess I've never done that yet.

But this is a stopping place. We haven't reached the end of chapter 52, but we should have. That is, where we have reached should be the end of chapter 52, because chapter 53 rightly begins at this point, where our existing numbering has chapter 52, verse 13, should be the beginning of chapter 53, as we shall see.

It's the beginning of a new oracle, a new servant song, which runs through chapter 53. And we will come back to that after our break.