

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

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LESSON TWENTY-NINE

ISAIAH

Read Isaiah 1:1 to learn something of the prophet's personal history.

- whose son was he?
- to which kingdom was he commissioned as a prophet?
- in whose reigns did he prophesy?

Compare Hosea 1:1, and observe that the two prophets were contemporary.

History of the Period

Turn again to II Kings, chapters 15-20, and refresh your recollection of the history of the period. Little attention need be given to Uzziah's reign because the prophet began his work near its close (Isaiah 6:1). The chief event in Jotham's reign was the military combination of Syria and Israel against Judah.

The reign of Ahaz is chiefly notable for his confederacy with Assyria. against these combined enemies. This confederacy proved nearly as fatal to Judah in the end as it had to Israel formerly in the time of Menahem.

From a friend Assyria soon turned to be an enemy, destroying many cities of Judah, and

prevented from capturing Jerusalem itself in the reign of Hezekiah, only by the supernatural interposition of GOD (II Kings 18, 19).

In the reign of Hezekiah the political situation is precisely reversed, and through the faith and piety of that good monarch, the Lord is honored and Assyria is overcome. An acquaintance with these facts, especially those in the time of Ahaz, is necessary to the elucidation of certain discourses of the prophet, especially in his earlier chapters.

Discourses Concerning Judah, Chapters 1-5

The discourses in this division of the book are similar in character to those already considered in the previous prophets. If we analyze one it will answer for all.

The first discourse is generally thought to be comprehended in chapter 1.

Observe:

- the indictment against the people (vv. 2-9),
- the threat (vv. 10-15),
- the exhortation (vv. 17-20), and
- the customary promise of purification and blessing (vv. 25-27).

The second discourse seems to cover chapters 2-4 inclusive, while the third in this section is in the nature of a parabolic song (chap. 5). Your attention is called again to the law of recurrence.

For example, the space of time covered by the first discourse is inclusive of all the discourses following. The point of view of its beginning is the prophet's own time, and that of its ending is the millennium. Within this same cycle the thought of all the subsequent discourses revolves. The HOLY SPIRIT simply recurs to it again and again, in other connections, and for the purpose of emphasizing particular incidents or events intervening.

The Prophet's Call, Chapter 6

We have spoken previously of the demand made on the prophets to announce their authority, and dwelt somewhat at length on the call of Amos. We now reach the similar circumstances in the history of Isaiah as described in chapter 6.

- when did he receive his call (v. 1)?
- describe the vision in connection with it (vv. 1-4).
- what was the immediate effect upon the prophet (v. 5)?
- what symbolizes the removal of his iniquity (vv. 6, 7)?
- what is the particular language of his divine call (v. 8, first part)?
- in what words does he give utterance to his consecration (v. 8, last part)?
- what is his commission (vv. 9, 10)?
- is it encouraging or discouraging at first?
- is it discouraging or encouraging in the end (vv. 11, 13)?

It will thus be seen that the prophet's commission ends as the discourses usually end, in hope for the people. It will be desirable to read these concluding verses. It is hardly necessary to suggest that this chapter offers a good opportunity for a Bible reading on the individual spiritual life.

We have here:

- the conviction of the sinner,
- his repentance and confession of sin,
- his forgiveness and cleansing,
- his call into the Master's service,
- his consecration of himself, and
- the character of the work he is expected to do.

Judah and Assyria, Chapters 7-9

We here reach one of the most interesting discourses in the book, not only because of its historical features, but the one or two illustrations it affords of the law of double reference hitherto explained.

Observe that the cause giving rise to it (7:1, 2), is the war against Judah, and the latter's confederacy with Assyria, recorded more at length in II Kings 16.

Observe the gracious and encouraging commission of the prophet to King Ahaz (vv. 3-9).

Observe in connection with that commission another illustration of that object-teaching spoken of in Hosea. For example, the name of the prophet's son whom he takes with him is a synonym of hope (see definition in the margin).

Observe further, the sign granted to Ahaz (vv. 10-16). It is here we have the first illustration of the law of double reference (v. 14).

The virgin here referred to may in the first instance mean any ordinary maiden of Judah, subsequently to be married and give birth to a child. But it is evident from Matthew 1:23, that in the mind of the HOLY SPIRIT it applied ultimately and completely only to CHRIST.

The prophet foresees the purpose of Ahaz to disregard the Lord and pursue his own plans with Assyria, and in this connection gives utterance to a forecast of the punishment coming upon Judah in consequence (7:7-8:22).

Observe that the nation on which they now leaned would become the means of their punishment (7:17-20).

Observe the extent of that punishment (8:7,8).

Observe that nothing but the head, that is the capital of Judah, would practically be left, and compare this with the fulfillment of the prophecy in Hezekiah's day when the Assyrians were defeated in their attack on Jerusalem.

It is probable that the period of sorrow and darkness further predicted of the nation in the last verse of the chapter, may cover a long time subsequent to the Assyrian assault, including the Babylonian captivity, and the later afflictions of the Grecian period. This opinion seems justified by the continuation of the discourse in the next chapter.

The Promised Redeemer

- in the midst of this darkness for Judah, what is it the prophet sees in the distance (9:2)?
- how does he explain this figure of speech (v. 3)?
- Read verse 3. What would be the cause of this joy (v. 4)?
- how does verse 5 indicate that the reference is to the millennium?
- through whom is this deliverance to be brought about (vv. 6, 7)?
- to whom do these verses apply (Luke 2:11)?

It is proper to add that the fulfillment of this prophecy is generally applied in a spiritual sense to the growth and development of the Christian church, but that does not necessarily exclude the more literal fulfillment in an earthly kingdom yet to be set up with Judah as its center, and CHRIST on the throne.

Punishment of Assyria, Chapters 10-12

Practically the next 17 chapters are taken up with discourses concerning the nations, predictive of coming judgments upon them for their sins, and especially their treatment of Judah. But the first of these discourses, that against Assyria, is so full and typical of the rest as to warrant consideration by itself.

The story is like this:

- In the first place, GOD used Assyria to punish Judah (10:5, 6).
- In the second place, Assyria's own wicked motive in the matter is revealed in verses 7-11.
- Then comes the threatened punishment on Assyria for her pride (vv. 12, 19).
- Following this we have the customary promise of deliverance, victory, and glory for Israel in the latter time, (10:20-12:6).

It should be noted that the names Israel, Judah, and house of Jacob in these chapters, are used interchangeably for the whole twelve tribes except where indicated otherwise.

Let us analyze this last part of the prophecy concerning the future of Israel.

Observe:

- their promised conversion (10:20-23);
- the punishment of their enemies (vv. 24-34); and
- the connection of both with the coming of the Messiah (chap. 11).

Observe that the reference to the Messiah is millennial, and points to His second coming. Read

the first nine verses of chapter 11.

Observe further in corroboration of this, that the time synchronizes with a future restoration of the people to their land, and union again of the two kingdoms in one (vv. 10-13).

Observe also the miraculous intervention of GOD in bringing this about (vv. 15, 16), and the joyful thanksgiving of the redeemed people in that day (chap. 12).

This prophecy furnishes a striking illustration of the peculiarity of the prophetic writings spoken of in an earlier chapter, namely, that they saw the future in space rather than in time.

To quote another's language, "When you look from a height on a landscape, hills seem close together which are really wide apart; so in the foretelling of events, the order, succession and grouping are presented, but the intervals of time are overlooked."

In the present instance the prophet covers a period of already more than 2,600 years, mentioning two or three great events, some fulfilled and some unfulfilled, with great lapses of time between them of which no mention is made, and yet the whole appears like a continuous and unbroken sequence.

Discourses Concerning the Nations, Chapters 13-27

The discourse against Assyria is followed by a series of similar ones against all the representative Gentile nations that had come into like relations to Israel. Please scan chapters 13-23 for the names of these nations.

It is proper to say, that in the judgment of some scholars, these predictions have not yet been completely fulfilled.

This consideration involves the conclusion that some of these nations at least are to experience a historical revival before the end of the present age. This is thought to be true especially of Babylon, which one school of prophecy regards as the future seat of the Antichrist. The perusal of the prophecy concerning Babylon, chapters 13, 14, is worthy of the closest attention even as literature. The scope and grandeur of its imagery is unequalled.

Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Goethe's *Faust* are the nearest suggestion of an approach to it, but were inspired by and copied from it. Special interest attaches to the description of Lucifer in chapter 14, which some regard as a description of the future Antichrist. Attention is called to the fact that, as in all the other instances, after the prophet has concluded his denunciation of the enemies of Israel he brings his discourse, or discourses, to a grand climax by predicting the ultimate triumph and blessing of the people of GOD.

In this instance the discourses against the nations are grouped together in the chapters already indicated, and in like manner the promises for Israel (or Judah) are grouped together at the end, like the finale of an oratorio. Read from chapter 24, verse 21, to the close of chapter 27.

The Relations of Judah and Egypt, Chapters 28-35

This section of the book, as to its principal features, is not unlike that previously considered under the head of Judah and Assyria.

I cannot place the first part of chapter 28 as satisfactorily as I could wish, but at verses 14-18 there is an allusion to a false covenant and the true in terms which seems to point to the end of the age. When we reach the study of Daniel this will appear plainer. In that book Israel is seen in her own land again in covenant with Antichrist, and it is doubtless this coming event which is foreshadowed here in Isaiah as well.

As harmonizing with this, chapter 29 of our present lesson brings before us the siege of Jerusalem by her enemies of the Roman world, at the end of the age, when these enemies shall have at their head the Antichrist who shall have broken his covenant with Israel.

The prophet Joel was the first who prepared us to understand this.

In the further analysis of this chapter observe these four divisions:

- (1) the siege itself (vv. 1-4);
- (2) the overthrow of the enemy (vv. 5-8);
- (3) the cause of Judah's punishment (vv. 9-16);
- (4) Judah's ultimate redemption (vv. 17-24).

The data which positively determine that no past siege of Jerusalem, but one yet to come, is here outlined, are found in the overthrow of Judah's enemies and her own triumph, which have never yet taken place.

The third division of the chapter - the cause of Judah's punishment, may be said to explain why the conditions of divisions two and four are not yet experienced in Judah's history.

Chapters 30 and 31 of this section deal more particularly with Judah's relationship to Egypt, but those who have been following these studies closely will not be unprepared to learn that while the Egypt of the prophet's own time is now in mind, yet it is evident also that according to the law of double reference, the Egypt of the latter days is being dealt with as well.

This appears in the sequel, for example:

The theme opens with a warning to Judah against trusting in Egypt (30:1-17). As a matter of fact, in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, which followed in the next century, Judah did fix her trust on Egypt with the result here foretold by the prophet, as we shall gather by and by from the study of Jeremiah. But notwithstanding this approximate fulfillment of his words, a remoter one is yet to come, and nothing could more strongly substantiate it than what follows.

For example, verses 18-30 of the chapter show the ultimate redemption of Judah (vv. 31-33), the overthrow of her enemy, both of which events are still future.

In chapter 31, the warning against trusting in Egypt is repeated (vv. 1-3), while immediately following is foreshadowed the interposition of the Lord on behalf of His people. We seem also

shut up to the conclusion, therefore, that in the end of the age, Judah, hard pressed by her enemies, shall once more look for help from the South instead of waiting on the Lord, but the latter shall have mercy upon her, and when the arm of flesh fails, interpose His own.

All this is still further confirmed by the contents of chapters 32-35, which gives us a magnificent picture of the reign of the Messiah.

- in chapter 32, the king is reigning;
- in chapters 33, 34 the judgments are falling on Judah's enemies, and
- in chapter 35 that nation is redeemed.

Part six of the book, as we divide it (chapters 36-39), is practically a review of the story of Hezekiah's reign as given in II Kings 18-20, and need not be dwelt upon at length.

Discourses Chiefly Millennial, 40-66

In the judgment of some that part of Isaiah now entered upon is so different in style from the former part, as to justify the thought of another author, a second Isaiah. But it is not within the scope of these lessons to go into that question. JESUS seems to have known but one Isaiah, and His example is sufficiently satisfying for us. However, the difference in style may be explained by the difference in subject, for while the first part of the book deals chiefly with the prophet's own time, the last part is almost entirely millennial. Nor is the difference in style so very radical after all.

Those who have now read the whole book synthetically, will recognize the same style in the earlier millennial chapters like 11, 25, and 35, as in these later ones. This is certainly true in the English translation, and all scholars are agreed that it is a faithful transcript of the Hebrew.

Read carefully the first two verses of chapter 40, and observe that the prophet's thought is resting far into the future. He sees Jerusalem restored, purified, comforted and at rest. This has not yet taken place, and in the light of what we have already learned as to the scope of the prophet's vision there can be no doubt that it refers to the millennial period, coincident, as shown in the earlier chapters, especially 11, with the second coming of CHRIST.

From this point to the end of the book the prophet seems to be dwelling very largely upon the intervening events which, in a sense, move forward toward the millennium. He mentions what must come to pass before the millennium appears.

Or, to change the thought somewhat, let us imagine that the whole of these last 27 chapters were simply one discourse; the text, 40:1, 2; the theme, comfort; the remainder, the several divisions of that theme. This, I think, will be the simplest and easiest way of studying the lesson, and bring about as good results as any.

If we had not gone pretty thoroughly into the study of the first part of the book, such a plan might be venturesome in taking too much for granted; but as it is, it will doubtless be found interesting and spiritually quickening, and also leave on the mind a very good impression of the contents and character of the whole book. Please understand, it is not affirmed that these 27

chapters did constitute one discourse originally, but we are only accommodating them to such an idea for present purposes.

Our theme then is "Comfort," comfort for Jerusalem, for Judah, for the people of GOD in the latter days; and the question arises. What are the elements of that comfort? What is it that GOD commissions His prophet to say to the people calculated to awaken hope, and quicken their expectation of that promised time?

Elements of Comfort

1. The first of these "*elements of comfort*" is the divine care over scattered Israel at the present time.

Let us imagine Israel doubting the glowing prognostication of the prophet on the ground of their weak, scattered and persecuted condition, and saying that GOD had forgotten them and His promise would not be fulfilled. Now read 40:9-26, in which the prophet enlarges upon the greatness and omnipotence of GOD, applying it to show that under the circumstances Israel could not be forgotten by Him (vv. 27-31). The same thought is expressed in other places, notably chapter 43.

2. The second of these elements of comfort may be described as the ultimate triumph of Israel over their enemies.

The nation might be represented as still questioning the possibility of the prophet's words on the ground of the vastness and strength of their enemies. Look now at chapter 41, beginning at about verse 10, for the evidence that these would be overcome by them through the power of GOD. The same thought is repeated in other chapters, particularly 51, 52.

3. A third element is the ministry of the Messiah.

If doubt still existed in their minds as to the ground on which this care for and defense of them might be predicated, it is now shown to arise through the person and work of that anointed One to whom gave all the prophets witness. Read chapter 42, especially the opening verses, and compare them with chapters 49:1-12; 50:4-11, and most particularly 52:13-53:12. It is the suffering Substitute who would bring it about and make it to be possible, in the bearing away of their sin.

4. A fourth element is the outpouring of the HOLY SPIRIT upon them.

They must still be perplexed in the acceptance of these promises on the ground of their own inward unworthiness and indifference toward GOD as a nation. To meet this the office of the HOLY SPIRIT is referred to (44:1-8). These verses should be read in connection with the last part of the preceding chapter to appreciate their full significance and value. It will be seen that as a result of this freshening grace the nation will revive, and there will be an eagerness to turn to the Lord and confess His name. The same thought is expressed in 32:14-20.

5. A fifth element is the particularization of their return from Babylon, chapters 44, 45.

This event, though far in advance of the millennium, might be regarded as a pledge of the fulfillment of the prophecies bearing upon that time; and awaken hope and minister comfort in the later and darker days of the present time for example, on the basis of the principles in Romans 5:3, 4.

6. A sixth element is the ultimate punishment of that strong and ancient enemy Babylon, type of every other enemy, chapters 46-48.

Sufficient space has been given to the consideration of this topic in the first part of the book.

7. The seventh and culminating element is the picture drawn by the prophet of their final restoration to the land, and the increased prosperity and blessing forever resting upon them (49:13-26; chaps. 54, 55, 60, 62, 65, 66).

It will require but a cursory examination of these chapters to discover such facts as the following, which are referred to again and again in different connections, for example:

- (1) The restoration is to be brought about by the aid of the Gentiles (49:22).
- (2) The nation's boundaries are to be greatly enlarged as well as its population (49:18-21).
- (3) It is in some way to have dominion over the other nations (60:12).
- (4) Its possession of the land is to be perpetual (60:21).
- (5) It is to be an object not only glorifying to GOD, but in which He Himself shall find joy (65:19).

The Messianic Prophecies

In our study of the earlier historical books of the Bible, very particular attention was drawn to the prophecies of CHRIST contained in each one of them.

This it is impossible to do with all the later books because of the multiplicity of such prophecies - some hundreds of them indeed. Only the principal ones, and those coming in the direct course of our synthetic outline can be noted. But one feature of them should be again mentioned, and that is, not only the way in which they increase in number, but develop in details.

The lines of the portrait are becoming more and more clearly defined with every touch of the divine Artist's pencil.

- the seed of the woman became the seed of Abraham, and the line of Judah, in Genesis.
- Deuteronomy spoke of Him as a prophet like unto Moses;
- Samuel described Him as a King sitting on the throne of His father David.

And now Isaiah pictures Him in so many ways!

He gives:

- His virgin birth,

- His two-fold nature,
- His many names, human and divine,
- His mission to Gentiles as well as Jews,
- His humiliation and His glory.

It is hoped that the individual student, and especially the teacher of classes will fix earnest attention on this matter as so essential to the knowledge of the Saviour's person and work, an acquaintance with the teachings of the New Testament to follow, and as an armory from which to draw ammunition for the defense of the truth of the Bible and Christianity.

If these things were spoken before they came to pass they must be divine in their origin.

If they meet and find fulfillment in JESUS of Nazareth and in Him only, He must be the Son of GOD and the Redeemer of the world.

~ end of Lesson 29 ~
