

The chapters from 48 on proceed with ever increasing velocity toward the great climax in Isaiah 53 -- the solution of the problem of sin. This is the work of the servant of God. Israel is the servant, but Israel cannot do the work. Yet the work is definitely to be performed.

Isaiah 48

At first sight this chapter does not appear to differ greatly from the chapters we have studied previously. It brings in a few new ideas, but these are closely related to themes already expressed. It is only in one verse that we find something extremely startling and new. We shall consider this verse, the sixteenth, at some length after examining the chapter as a whole.

The first half of the chapter, verses 1-11, appears like a rebuke to the people of Israel. On examination, however, it is seen to be quite different from the rebukes which are so frequent in the early chapters of Isaiah. There the prophet constantly warned the people that if they continued in their sin God would send them into exile. Here, as in the latter part of chapters 42 and 43, the assumption is that the people are already in exile and that God is going to deliver them. In chapters 42 and 43, the reason why God had sent the people into exile was discussed; here the fear that they may be obstinate and rebellious even after deliverance is suggested. Israel may be so stubborn as to attribute even the deliverance to a false god, rather than give the Lord the glory. How similar to people today, who are constantly seeking material reasons for their prosperity, and attributing deliverance from disaster to their own might or wisdom, rather than to the goodness of God.

The theme of God's omniscience, which has been so frequently touched upon in these chapters, is the outstanding idea in the verses before us. It is used as a means of answering the expected objection from the rebellious in Israel. These obstinate people will give credit for the deliverance to an idol if it is not clearly proven that the eternal God is the actual deliverer (vv. 4-5). For this reason God is predicting the deliverance so explicitly that it should be impossible for anyone to assert that some other than He has performed it.