

8 UNDERSTANDING ISAIAH

are sharply different in certain respects. They do not contain specific statements showing the historical background, as is frequently the case in the earlier chapters. They hardly mention Assyria, which occupies a very prominent position in the earlier chapters. A close study of these chapters makes it apparent that in them the prophet has turned his attention away from the sad condition of Judah under Manasseh, and is looking forward to the redemption which God has promised.

He sees the people so steeped in sin and wickedness that the exile is absolutely certain. Just how soon it will come he does not know, but he is not looking in that direction. He is looking rather at the glorious redemption which God has promised will come after the exile. He is no longer speaking to the people of Israel as a whole, but rather to the godly portion among them. He is addressing those who are believers in the Lord and who are anxiously listening to Isaiah's words and hoping for better days in the future. In addressing them and giving them words of hope he is also giving them a book which is to be treasured and passed on, in order that it may help in restoring the courage and comforting the hearts of their descendants in the exile, when the judgment of God has fallen and His redemption is approaching.

One important fact about these chapters should be noticed. They contain a high point or climax toward which everything previous looks, and from which everything subsequent is derived. This high point is the central chapter of the twenty seven, the much beloved 53rd chapter, which so clearly and vividly portrays the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross for the salvation of those who shall believe on his name.