

General Introduction

The section of Isaiah that runs from chapter 40 to the middle of chapter 56 contains many of the best-known verses in the entire Old Testament. Everyone who has ever heard this Messiah is familiar with its wonderful beginning from the first verse of Isaiah 40, comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, for thus saith your God. A little further on comes that beautiful song based on verse 11 of this same chapter, He shall feed His flock and gently lead those that are with young. These are only samples of the many sections of this part of Isaiah that are so prominent in the Messiah.

Most Christians are familiar with Isaiah 53 which they consider to be a wonderful picture of the death of Christ for our sins. Yet very few would have any idea how it fits into the context. This ~~can~~ chapter is about the great work of the servant of the Lord. Who is this servant of the Lord? The term is used many times before this. Does it refer to Israel? Does it refer to Christ? Just what is the meaning of the term?

This wonderful section of the book of Isaiah has many verses that seem clearly to point to things related to the exile of the Jews and their return. Some of these verses are of outstanding beauty, yet comparatively few of them are known to Christians. How do they fit together with the great Messianic verses of the passage? Unfortunately, ~~me~~ to most Bible students the passage seems to be just a collection of beautiful verses, some of them of great importance and some of less importance, rather than a connected continuous composition. Actually a *study of* the passage proves it to have a closely knit logical structure, starting in with a certain situation and moving forward gradually but definitely until it reaches its great climax in Isa. 53. Just as the quotations from Shakespeare mean far more when taken in context ~~w~~ than when used simply as isolated ~~ma~~ mottoes, so the verses in this portion of Isaiah are far more meaningful when understood as part of a connected