



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | [believerschapeldallas.org](http://believerschapeldallas.org)

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 41: 1-7

“Jehovah: Israel’s Sovereign God”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer].....may it be useful and profitable in our daily lives and this we ask in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Last time we began our study of the 40th chapter of the Book of Isaiah and we commented as we began that this was the beginning of a last great section of this prophecy. In fact, these 27 chapters, from 40 through 66, contain the highest mountain peaks of prophecy found in the Old Testament. The Prophet soars to use his own figure with wings like eagles. In the preceding chapter, chapter 40, after the prologue, you remember it’s a reference to the voices which seem to be coming anonymously but which we traced back to God himself but after this prologue, God began, through the prophet, to unfold the greatness of Himself in nature and in history and we pointed out that the thing that he was particularly interested in getting over to Israel was the fact that he was the creator and governor of nature.

And the 12th verse came up for attention in which the prophet says, “who hath measured the waters, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and measured out heaven with the span and measured the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” And this is one of the

greatest of the tributes that the prophet gives to the Lord. You know how little water you can hold in the hollow of your hand but the prophet’s God is so great that he is able to measure out all of the waters that are contained in the earth, all of the seas and all of the oceans in the hollow of his hand. He is that big a God, and he measured out heaven with the span and the span is the distance between your little finger and your thumb. This is the measure that God has used to measure out the heavens.

We know something of the vastness of space in the 20th Century but we do not have any idea really of how vast it is, scientifically but Isaiah’s God is so big that he is able to measure out the heavens by the distance between his finger and his thumb. Now of course Isaiah is using figures of speech. God does not have a thumb; he does not have a finger but he is using anthropomorphic language and he is trying in the only way possible by means of figures such as this to express the incomparable nature of the God of Israel. “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him?” And then, “With whom took he counsel and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of justice and taught him knowledge and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold the nations are like a drop in a bucket.”

And I commented upon the fact that the figure was the figure of a man who has a bucket in his hand which is empty but having poured out the water there are a few drops that still remain upon it. That’s what the nations are to God. They are just like a drop in the bucket, and I wonder what one nation really is to God -- one nation, one great nation like Red China. It’s not even a drop in the bucket so far as Israel’s incomparable God is concerned.

Now in the 41st chapter, which is the chapter we want to look at tonight, he will complete the sunrise of his Gospel by addressing the heathen nations. And to them he claims to be the God of history and prophecy. The idols that the nations worship, they are nothing, they are vanity. They are emptiness in the sight of God. So the 40th chapter

and the 41st chapter really form a kind of introduction to this last section, a message to Israel and a message to the nations.

But in this 41st chapter as we see from the outline, in the central part of the chapter, there is also a little interruption of his thought and he comforts Israel. But let’s look now at Jehovah, the sovereign Lord of history, verses 1 through 7 of Isaiah chapter 41, and will you follow along in your Bibles as I read these seven verses?

“Keep silence before me, O coast lands and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; let them speak; let us come near together to judgment. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them like the dust to his sword, and like driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he. The coasts saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, it is ready for the soldering and he fastened it with nails and it should not be moved.”

And as you probably can tell from now he is describing the making of idols. The goldsmith, the solder, the nails, then they construct a little image and they want to be sure that that image will not move, that someone might not get over. After all, it’s a God, you know.

Now let’s stop for a moment. Nature and history have an appeal to God’s people, but if you are going to appeal to the nations of the earth what you talk to them about? If they do not know the God of Israel, if they were not in covenant relationship with him,

how is God going to be able to speak to them? But he speaks to them through contemporary history and he points them to the one who is in control of the affairs of men.

And in this 41st chapter God gives an illustration of the fact that is he who has his hand upon history. The history is really the workshop of God and because he is the incomparable God who knows the end from the beginning, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, he is able to look into the past and interpret it properly and he also is able to look into the future and know what is going to come to pass. And so the Prophet Isaiah addresses the nations in behalf of God and points them to the one who is able to foretell the future. And this of course is the sign of his divinity. It is not the only sign but is something that would touch the men of the world. They could respond to that.

So, in the first four verses of this chapter he calls the islands and he calls the peoples together into the law of court. If you notice that expression, “let us come near together to judgment,” that’s the Hebrew way of saying let us go to law together and God is speaking and he is calling all of the distant places of the earth into the courtroom within and he is going to give a prophecy and he is going to see that that prophecy comes to pass and the prophecy is contained in the 2nd verse.

Now, before we look at this prophecy, remember. Isaiah is writing from about 740 to 700 B.C. These prophecies are probably given during the reign of King Hezekiah and so of course they are given somewhere around 700 BC. Now he is going to prophesy the rise of Cyrus, the Persian. Now Cyrus came on the scene in the middle of the 5th century before our Lord. It was in 549 B.C. that Cyrus made his first great conquest when he overcame Croesus, the king of Lydia. So the Prophet Isaiah is, by the spirit of God, looking into the distant future, approximately a 150 years from his own time and he is going to prophesy the rise of Cyrus, the king of Persia.

By this time, the children of Israel of course would be in captivity for they were in captivity from 605 to 535 BC. It is Cyrus of course who issues the decree which allows

them to return. And so the prophet is looking into the future and prophesy that Cyrus is going to come on the scene and that he is going to be the one, who under God, shall free the remnant so that they may return to the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the city and establish again the worship in the ancient place. So, the prophet now is looking into the distant future and he is prophesying of someone who is going to be the means of blessing to the children of Israel. And this prophecy is to be the sign that the God who makes the prophecy is the true God because it is going to come to pass and it is the kind of thing whereby he might be tested. So, in 2nd verse, we read, “who raised up the righteous man from the East.”

Now he is writing of course from the standpoint of Babylon now the children of Israel will be in captivity at this time and as you know Cyrus did arise from the East. He was actually from the little land of Anshan which ultimately became part of Persia, a little to the east of Babylonia. When he ultimately became king of Persia and Media and overcame Media. He became king over a territory that was not only east of Babylonia but also to the north and that is why in the 25th verse of this chapter we read, “I have raised that one from the north and he shall come from the rising of the sun; from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name.” So there was a kind of circle from the east to the north and Cyrus then has control of all that territory so that he is the one from the east and he also is the one from the north.

But here in the 2nd verse we read, “Who raised up the righteous man from the east called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them like the dust to his sword, and like driven stubble to his bow.” And so Cyrus’ rise is predicted and also his victorious conquest. He is the great king who is going to overcome Babylonia. And the picture that is given here is of a people who now are very much disturbed because of the rise of Cyrus.

It has been said that Cyrus was [French, phonetic] *le Pluve Simpatique de Longtique ete*, “the most congenial man of antiquity.” He was a great character. And I

have a friend in Houston who preaches, who claims that Cyrus was a Christian. Well, I don’t know whether he was a Christian or not. I know that he went into the city of Babylon, having taken the city, he offered sacrifices to manifold gods that have been discovered on inscriptions and so the indication is that Cyrus, if he was a Christian, he certainly was a Christian given to expediency and I have always been a little suspicious of Christians who offer sacrifices to the heathen gods.

To me that does not sound very Christian, but anyway I’m not going to say he was but I hope he was, he was certainly a grand man and anyone who has ever studied ancient history or has studied Greek will of course have high regard for Cyrus for he was a great king and a great man and he of course was God’s anointed one for the deliverance of the children of Israel. He is called that later, we are going to come across Cyrus, and he is called the anointed one later on.

Now then you will notice, in the 4th verse, it states, “Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first and the last; I am he,” and I want to stop for a moment and say a word about this expression. You heard me say something about it before but it bears repeating. “I am he.” Any person who was a Hebrew would understand that this is a very unusual expression. As a matter of fact this expression, I am sure that makes it much more intelligible to you. We also have a great expression which is the equivalent of it. *Ego eimi* which means “I AM.” Now, this means “I am he,” and that expression is rendered in the Old Testament Septuagint, that is the Old Testament Greek translation of the Hebrew text is rendered by *ego eimi*, “I am,” they are equivalents. Now that expression is an expression that is used to describe the essential character of God, “I am he.” You see you can never define God. Isn’t that interesting that the Bible contains no definition of God? It begins, “in the beginning God” and if you were to stop there and say, “who is God,” the only answer that could be given you is “I am he.” “I am who I am”.

Moses one day saw a bush that was burning and not consumed, that’s an illustration of God of course. And so he took off his shoes from off his feet for that ground was Holy and he was told “I am who I am.” That’s God. That is, it’s impossible for man to define God because He is the absolute being. Once we define God then we limit God. That’s what definition means. So there is no way to define God. He is God, that’s all. So when your children say, who made God or who was there before God was, there is no answer you can give to that. Don’t rush to your preacher and ask for the answer, there is no answer to that. He is the great uncaused being. There is no one behind Him. So an absolute definition of God is impossible. Now we may have a relational definition and Moses remember was given a relational definition. When he said, “who shall I say sent me when I go,” He said, “tell them I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” That’s a relational definition, that’s the definition of God in his covenant relationship to Israel.

Now, in the Old Testament, when the prophets, and particularly Isaiah, when they want to express the essential nature of God, they speak about the one who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, “I am He.” He is the covenant keeping God who led Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Now isn’t it startling that in the New Testament a man comes on the scene, so far as the average Israelite knew he was born like any other man, if they had inquired they would have been told, there was something strange about his birth. If they had inquired of the father and mother, they would have been told, he was born of a virgin. But he grew up and he began to speak about himself or began to speak in language that had accents that came from the prophecy of Isaiah.

As a matter of fact, he spoke about, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the door. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the true vine. I am the light of the world.” It’s almost as if he phrased his language to give others a hint that he had some relationship to the covenant keeping God who led Israel out of the land of Egypt into the Promised Land. It was as if he wished to make a connection. “Remember the God of your fathers,”

but then more startling than that, in several of the experiences of our Lord he did not add any defining words, “I am the door, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the way, the truth and the Life, I am the light of the world.” He said simply “I am.” He said simply, “I am he.” And the identification was complete.

For example, there was a time just after the Passover, and it is very interesting that at the Passover time the Jews engaged in ritual in which these very texts from Isaiah were repeated in which “I am he” was stated more than once and further more it was connected with the water. “When thou passeth through the waters, I shall be with thee.” We’ll come to that text, if not next Monday, the following. And connected with the Passover is this ritual that marks out God as the one who is, “I am he.”

Now, on the night of Passover time Jesus had fed the five thousand, remember, and he entered into a little boat or rather he sent the disciples into a little boat to cross the sea and he went up on the mountainside to pray. And when the disciples went out into that little lake, a storm arose, and they were in the midst of a terrible storm and they were fearful that they were going to lose their lives and they toiled in rowing, rowing for hours until finally in the fourth watch, when things were at their blackest, Peter and the others looked off and they saw Jesus walking on the water. Amid the lightning and the thunder and the waves, here was a being coming across. They were immediately afraid because the Jews didn’t really like water, they were land lovers. They had all kinds of stories about things that happened on the sea, and who knows, this could be the Loch Ness monster so far as they were concerned. And so they said “it’s a ghost,” that’s precisely what they said “it’s a ghost,” and Jesus spoke and he said, “Fear not, I am; be not afraid.” Now what was that? That was our Lord claiming to be “I am he, the one who, when you pass through the waters, is with you, the one who led Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land, I am, I am he.” It is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now then, it’s not surprising then when we open the Book of Revelation, in the 1st chapter and what we read of Jesus where John the Apostle says that he has a message



that comes from the Father, from the Son, and from the Spirit and when he describes this God who gives him a message, he says that he’s the Alpha and the Omega, he is the beginning and the end. Those are the very terms Isaiah applies to the God who says “I am he.” So you see, you nations the one who calls up Cyrus a hundred and fifty years from now and who gives him authority over the nations and before him the nations shall pale in fear, the one who calls him up from nothing into existence is the everlasting God, who ultimately shall be incarnated in our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

Now, what do you think the nations shall do when Cyrus comes? Well if you read ancient history, you will discover. Croesus began to shake like a leaf. And so did others. But God had already written it in his word, a century and a half before and what do people do, who have no god to lean upon. Well, they rushed to the gods. Now in that day they had visible gods, they made them with their hands. And so when Cyrus began to make his moves in the East and it was heard in Babylonia and it was heard over in Lydia and it was heard in other places. The priest’s business got better and better. Times were good for the priests and the artisans, and the goldsmiths and the silversmiths were busy in making idols in order that they might be protected from this man who is arising in the East and causing fear in the hearts of men.

And they tried buoy each other up with little notes, you know. And so I can just imagine that statesmen of those days from Greece. For after all remember, Croesus had some contacts with Greece, he had conquered some Ionian cities and as a matter of fact, at one time, if I remember correctly, he was in alliance in Sparta and so he made some alliances and they sent diplomatic notes back and forth and the essence of them is they were sweet little sob notes in which they said, “be of good cheer.” That’s what we read right here. That’s what he says, “they helped everyone his neighbor, everyone said to his brother, be of good courage, be of good courage,” because God’s man is rising in the East. He is God’s man in the sense that He is causing him to come on the scene.

You know God is not like the idol gods. They make prophecies that they will not stand behind but he stands behind his. Now then, what is Israel going to do? After all Israel is in captivity. She would be in captivity when these things happen. Shall they be afraid to?

So we come to the second part. Jehovah the faithful Lord of Israel and notice, verse 8 now through verse 20 and I am going to read them and this is the word of comfort to Israel in captivity. “But thou,” notice the but. Isn’t it interesting how God so often has his little buts that reverse the work of man. Now we have been studying Jonah on Sunday morning, remember, and God gave him that message, “go to Nineveh, cry against that wicked city but Jonah went down to Joppa, took ship west to Tarshish” But, the Bible says, God sent a tempest, a storm, his little buts, and here is a little but of comfort. “But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend.”

You know, I am so delighted that according to the Bible I am part of the seed of Abraham. That’s right, that’s what the Bible says. Galatians, chapter 3. It says, “if we be Christ’s, then are we Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” Abraham’s seed and Abraham is the friend of God. “Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth and called Thee from the chief men thereof and said unto thee, thou art my servant. I have chosen Thee and not cast Thee away. Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am Thy God. I will strengthen thee. Yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold Thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Righteousness in the Bible does not mean what we think by the term righteousness, that is, in the Old Testament, I should say, in the prophetic word. It really means, by my just dealing with men. By my faithfulness, it even could be rendered, faithfulness to His promises,

“Behold all they that were incensed against Thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing and they that strive with Thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them and shall not find them, even them contended with thee. They that war against Thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of naught. For I the Lord Thy God will hold Thy right hand saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not thou worm Jacob and ye men of Israel, I will help Thee saith the Lord, and Thy Redeemer the Holy one of Israel. Behold I will make Thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small and shall make the hills like chaff.”

If when Cyrus arises, consternation and impotence grip the nations, then confidence and power may grip Israel the chosen of God. They are His chosen servant. You know this text. Of course has reference to the nation Israel. It tells Israel that during this time when God has raised up this heathen king, Cyrus who shall overcome that ancient world and shall become their king that they have nothing to worry about it because he is on their side.

Now, you know we have promises that if anything are even greater than these. Let me just quote a couple to you. “All things work together for good to those that love him, to those who are the called according to his purpose.” You know what that means? You are the chosen one. “For whom he hath foreknown, he also hath predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren and whom he hath foreknown he has called or foreordained, he has called, and whom he has called he has justified and whom he has justified,” and you remember the text in Romans does not say He will glorify, “he hath glorified,” because it is so certain to take place that Paul puts it in the past tense. In other words, this divine continuing providence that began when he foreknew in the ages past and continues on into the present and on into the future. It guarantees that one day I shall be conformed to the image of his Son.

Therefore suppose I do have some problems, suppose I do have some difficulties in my life, suppose I am faced with things that seem beyond my power to cope with, what shall I do? Get my .45 and blow out my brains? Get a divorce from my wife who causes all of these difficulties? No, I shall trust in him. I know that all things work together for my good. They may not be good in themselves. Even tragedies, they work for my ultimate good and because I am called and foreknown and because it is predestinated by God that I will be like Christ, I know that the process is superintended by loving God and he never allows me to be tested above that which I am able. So we see the problems of life really are small in the light of the care of God.

I sat around yesterday afternoon to talk with a young lady whose husband is leaving her. They had a happy marriage. It’s utterly irrational, couldn’t possibly explain it, it just doesn’t seem to make any sense at all and yet is happening but fortunately she has put her faith in Jesus Christ and so all things work together for good and amid the tears that fall down her face, there is something deep down within that I feel is going to sustain her, I hope will bring him back. But you see these things are really things that touch the very inmost parts of our being, His great promises.

Did you notice the three – I tried to single them out -- verse 8, “I have chosen.” “Jacob whom I have chosen.” Isn’t that a wonderful thing? Now, I have some friends who just rebel like an animal against the wonderful truth that God has chosen us. Why do you want to kick against the pricks when I just relax and enjoy the wonderful truth that God has chosen us? And if you have some difficulties in your mind, wait. Keep thinking about it. God will give you the solution and if you don’t get them all down here on the earth, you will get them when you get to heaven. But rejoice in the blessings. He has chosen us. Of course, he is speaking about Israel and he is talking about the fact that he chose Abraham and when he chose Abraham he chose them, because remember he said to Abraham, “in Thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” And so Abraham

and his seed were comprehended in the promise and we were comprehended ultimately. Among all the nations who put their faith in Jesus Christ. “I’ve chosen.”

Notice the 10th verse, the second promise, “For I am with thee.” Now that’s a wonderfully practical thing but we have it in the New Testament. What did the Lord Jesus say when he was resurrected? “Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.” You know what that great expression really means? It doesn’t mean just that He is with you from time to time. It doesn’t mean that he is just with you when you need him that you can call on him but it really is an expression means, “I am with you everyday all of the day, throughout all of the days to the end of the age and ever more” and there is stress upon the fact that he is there constantly even when we don’t even realize that he is. When we have forgotten him, He is still there.

And then the third “I will.” Oh by the way, I should have mentioned verse 14. “Fear not Thou worm, Jacob.” Isn’t that interesting! I reckon Jacob would rise up and say, “don’t call me a worm.” You know in the Psalms, in the 22nd Psalm which is a messianic Psalm, a Psalm of our Lord, he says, “I am a worm and no man” speaking of the tremendous suffering that he underwent. I don’t know when Jesus was a worm. I think that perhaps when he was upon the cross is the ultimate significance of it. When he has become the sin sacrifice and cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” That’s when in the first sense, he is most humiliated for he is bearing our sin that we might be with God. But I think when I read the text of Gethsemane, because you remember he went into the Garden he fell upon his knees and the burden of what is going to transpire, the thought of the sufferings of the penalty of the sins of the whole world had so weighed him down that finally he fell upon his face, the text says, and there he is groveling in the ground, bathing the ground in his tears, so to speak, like a worm.

Jacob is a worm, utterly humiliated, but because of sin, but you know when we realize that we are worms that’s when God can really help us. It’s only when we only come to the place that we realize this that there is room for God to work. Most of us are

so self-sufficient, even among Christians, that he can do very little for us. We think we have got it pretty well made until perhaps something happens over which we have no control like cancer. Then we think twice.

The 15th verse says, “Behold I will make” because you see, He does not choose us and he is not with us without a purpose. He wants to use us and so he is going to make Israel a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. In other words Israel is really saved for the blessing of others to be an instrument of God and you and I have come to know God not to rejoice in our blessings, sit on our back porches and drink mint juleps, spiritual mint juleps, you know, but we really have been brought to know God that others might come to know him. A Christian man is a most active man. I was thinking today, I just tell you what my thoughts were going thorough my her head is normal. You know, I am getting old, I am long past middle age and I was thinking, you know, it is really time, if I were not in the Lord’s work, it’s time for me to start spending more time on the back porch and if I were a drinking man, drinking mint juleps, that’s what they do down south. So I guess I would just kind of withdraw and fade out and drink a cup of coffee or something like that. But no Christian really ever comes to that place because every moment of our time is devoted by the grace of God to the manifestation of the truth that has come to us and it has come to us that others might have this truth.

Now then I’m going to skip down to verse 21 for our third section, Jehovah the sovereign Lord of history and you will notice I have not concluded because he picks up the subject again. He has just devoted a few verses to the comfort of Israel. He is thinking of future now, and of, now Cyrus’ rise and how he is going to come on the world scene, but Israel thou should be disturbed because remember the Abrahamic promises, “you belong to me, I am going to preserve you.” As a matter fact, he is going to lead them out of captivity and back as exiles into their land and establish them there.

But now he picks up the story again, so to speak, with the nations and he is in law court with them and he says in the 21<sup>st</sup> verse, “produce your cause, saith the Lord.

Bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and show us what will happen.” This is the test. The test of God is, does he have his hand upon history and prophecy. “Let them show the former things what they are that we may consider them and know the latter end of them or declare us things to come. Tell us what the future holds. Show the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are gods.” This is the test. Your little idols you have over your mantelpiece, if they are God, they can speak and they can tell us what the future is. “Yea do go or do evil that we may be dismayed and behold it together.” Do something. Don’t just sit there like a bump on a log.

Listen, “behold ye are of nothing,” this is God speaking about the gods, “and your work of naught and abomination is he who chooseth you. I have raised up one from the north (Cyrus) and he shall come”. I am willing to enter into the arena of facts, the facts of history and you can test my promises if you like. You know this prophecy that God gave through Isaiah is so remarkable and so beautifully fulfilled in Cyrus, that if you do not believe in the supernatural, what must you do with this prophecy? Well, you must say that it was written after the event which is what many of our modern critics say. They look at this. Do not ask is the language the same as the previous part of the book, is the language, the language of Isaiah, the prophet who lived in the reign of King Hezekiah, they look at it and say this is a prophecy. It came to pass. No man can do that. It must have been written after the event. What do you think of that? You know what I think? I think it’s unscientific. You know why? Because it reflects a basic attitude of anti-supernaturalism, which is a philosophical viewpoint, unprovable. As a matter of fact, it’s the position of faith because it’s a faith that the supernatural is impossible. And it has no support whatsoever. It’s a guess and it’s a guess in the dark.

“I have raised up one from the north. He shall come from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name. He shall come upon princess as upon mortar and as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning that we may know and

before time that we may say he is righteous? Yea, there is none that showeth, yea there is none that declareth, yea there is none that heareth your words. The first shall say to Zion, behold, behold them and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.” That Of course is Isaiah. “For I beheld and there was no man, even among them, and there was no counselor that when I asked of them could answer a word.” Try to talk to the idols, have you ever tried it? Say hello, how are you? What do you say today? He doesn’t reply. He cannot talk. How’s your health today? And you push him over and he falls. He hasn’t been made properly. Sometimes there’s a little shake in the house and the idol falls over on its face because it has no strength. That’s why Isaiah talks about the goldsmiths and the others making them so they shall not be moved. It’s all funny, you know, really funny. Behold they are all vanity, God says. Their works are nothing. Their melted and cast images are wind and confusion.

Now, I think this is one of the greatest challenges that God has ever issued to men and its challenge is simply this. “Bring your idols out and let them say that the future holds. Let them make their prophecies so we can test them.” This is what we say to Jean Dixon. This is what we say to anyone who claims to be God or claims to be a prophet of God. Let’s put the prophecies out in the ramp of contemporary history so we can check them by the facts. God is willing to enter into that kind of court and have His works tested.

All of the prophecies of the old testament that pointed forward to Jesus Christ, hundreds of them, the birth time, the birth place, the birth family, all of them, fulfill precisely in our Lord Jesus Christ in order to impress upon us as surely as it is possible that this God is the God who controls the past, the present, and the future, but what about the gods? They are dead. They are dead.

It was Nietzsche who said, “god is dead.” Some of our theological students in our liberal theological seminaries have good senses of humor. In one theological seminary, somebody wrote on the side of one of the walls, “God is dead,” and put under it



“Nietzsche’s” – Some of the students came along and wrote under it “Nietzsche is dead – God.” [Laughter]

Now let’s think a moment about the world scene and I think if you get the world scene you’ll understand why this is so impressive. Israel is a captive in Babylon. In 585 B.C. a treaty was made between the three great powers of Western Asia, Babylonia, Media, and Lydia so that from Sparta in Greece through Sardis, in Asia Minor all the way to Ekbatana in Persia and Babylon in Babylonia, there was communication. That was an amazing thing. Communication all the way from Greece through Ekbatana into Babylon. Magnificent crescent. The world was almost one in the north. And that’s why Isaiah in chapter 41 and verse 1 call upon the isles and the peoples to come to court with him because the world has grown smaller and smaller in Isaiah’s day.

And then 549, Astyages was king of Medea and he attacked Cyrus, the king of Anshan and Cyrus won. Cyrus became the Lord of Medea. Well now then Cyrus became the lord of Medea. He replaced the Medians in this triple alliance and so consequently because he was now controlling the territory Media all the way around Persia, Anshan, he looked down upon Babylon which was the world power in prophecy. He looked down upon Babylon from the north and Babylon was now worried because there is Cyrus, the king of Persia and Medea and Babylonia down below him and Lydia to the west.

Now when Lydia heard about it, King Croesus, remember, was the H.L. Hunt of the ancient world. He was fresh from subjection of the Ionian Greek cities in Asia Minor, he was very strong but he heard about the rise of this king in the east and he was very much disturbed and of course like all the kings of the ancient world he wanted to know what heaven had to say. And so he did what the kings who had money could do. He sent embassies to all of the oracles of the ancient world and there were many of them. He got only two answers. You see the chips are down; the oracles don’t like the prophecy. Especially that it might cost them something.

But he did get two replies and he got one from the oracle at Delphi. Some has said, ‘Croesus got the best advice consistent with ignorance and caution of the priests.’ And this is the advice he got. By crossing the Halys, that was the river that marked the boundary of Lydia and Medea of Cyrus’ kingdom. By crossing the Halys, Croesus will destroy a great empire. Now that kind of prophecy of course is typical of the prophecies of the gods. Like the prophecies of Jean Dixon. They can be fulfilled in a thousand different ways. Of course, Croesus made the fatal mistake of not asking whose empire would be destroyed.

You see the oracle had protected itself. By crossing the Halys the great empire will be destroyed. No matter what happens the prophecy is correct. If Cyrus wins the prophecy is correct. If Croesus wins, the prophecy is correct. And so the priestess who sat on the tripod at Delphi who is interpreted by the priests there for all of the money and you should read the money that Cyrus spend getting this prediction, this worthless prediction. So they are bound to be right. And Croesus, he made also another request and he got another answer. He asked if his reign would be long and he was given the reply when a mule became the king of the beasts, he could fly from his throne.

Now that appears, on the surface, to me of course he is going to rule forever. But of course again the oracle had protected itself because you see Cyrus was really half Persian and half Median and so in a sense he is a human mule. So again the oracle is protected. Well, Croesus crossed the Halys and of course Cyrus defeated him and a great empire was destroyed. It was Lydia’s not Cyrus’.

So the world is politically and religiously excited when the oracles are issuing prophecies that are in doubt and ambiguous, this is the day of Isaiah you see, this is the day that Isaiah is prophesying about. The kings are sending off information to all of the oracles all over, everywhere to discover what heaven has to say on points, and they are getting back words from the oracles just like this that don’t mean anything. And

everybody is fearful because of what’s happening on the political scene and they are getting no help from heaven.

And so it is in the midst of all of these sobbing messages, “be of good cheer, be of good courage” that the oracles are offering one another that Isaiah prophesies for you see there is one source upon the earth always that does not give an uncertain sign and that one source is Jehovah. He gives no uncertain sign. It sounds always certain and even in the 20th century his sound is certain through Jesus Christ. He has spoken through Christ. The cross is a fact. Men may have life through the cross and may have the God of that cross as their constant companion. No uncertain sign because he is the one who knows the end from the beginning. And so the voice of Jehovah who is the God of history and prophecy challenges the heathen above the clattering of the goldsmiths and the silversmiths who are making their little idols were of vanity.

Why should we trust in idols? Why should we trust in any other god than the true God who has spoken through Jesus Christ? There is no reason. Has he not satisfied you? Has he not met all of your needs? Has he not been a stay in trouble? Has he not been a comfort in distress? Has he not been one who has solved the problems of life as you have faced them? Has he ever disappointed you? Is it not true that every time that failure has come it is because we have failed him? He has not failed us. Then surely the proper response is the response that Isaiah speaks about himself. He offers peace speaks to those whose mind is stayed upon Thee because we trust in thee.

Time is up. Let us close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this wonderful expression of the greatness of our God that thou hast given us through Isaiah the Prophet, and we pray Lord that this great God who has become incarnate in Jesus Christ may in reality be our God through all of the daily affairs our lives and we commit ourselves to Thee.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

