

ISAIAH ... the man with the telescopic sight
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(ISAIAH 53)

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah represents the greatest prophetic utterance of Old Testament literature. It is a thrilling fact that a man who lived seven centuries before the incarnation saw clearly the details of the death of Christ. Isaiah had telescopic eyes which penetrated seven centuries of the unrevealed.

Isaiah saw the death of Christ, and understood its purpose
... and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all
he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was the stroke upon him " (vv. 6-8).
This was contrary to most of the Messianic predictions, which foretold an earthly kingdom of abiding splendor. Nevertheless it harmonized with the types and shadows of Old Testament teaching, where God declared that " without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Christ sought a kingdom-a kingdom within the cleansed hearts of His people. He died to put away their sin.

Isaiah saw Christ's burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea
" And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (v. 9). Although Christ would die the death of a malefactor, His body would not be interred in a common grave. " When the even was come, there came a rich man.... And he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. . . . And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock " (Matt. 27: 57-60).

Isaiah saw the conversion of the thief
"... when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed . . . " (v. 10). This was a most remarkable utterance. Man's part in the crucifixion was only a means to an end. " It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Yet at the very moment when the Christ would be offered for sin, He would see His seed-His first child. We need hardly be reminded that even though the two thieves cursed the Lord Jesus, one eventually sought and found forgiveness.

Isaiah saw the resurrection of Christ
" . . . he shall prolong his days" (v. 10). At the time of Isaiah's prophecy it seemed fantastic that anyone to be so brutally put to death should be able to continue His ministry. Surely death would terminate effort. The prophet merely shook his head and declared that the grave would be conquered. The rich man's tomb would be unable to retain its body.

Isaiah saw the prosperity of the cause of Christ
" . . . and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied " (vv. 10, 11). Travail is a term extensively used in connection with child-birth. Did the prophet know that through the sacrificial death of Christ, living souls would be born again into the family of God? "... by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities." The conversion of the thief would only be the prelude to a great symphony of praise arising from the hearts of the redeemed host.

Isaiah saw that Christ would be accompanied by two thieves

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" . . . and he was numbered with the transgressors " (v. 12).
This misfit mean that in the sight of God, Christ was numbered among the sons of men ; that as the representative of a guilty race, He would reconcile us to God. Yet it appears more likely that the prophet's eyes had detected the presence of another thief, and that Christ in their midst signified He was numbered among transgressors.

Isaiah heard Christ's prayer for a guilty people
" . . . he made intercession for the transgressors " (v. 12).
Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do " (Luke 23: 34). Are we justified in suggesting that Isaiah's vision saw another great fact-that Christ as the high priest of His people would intercede before the throne of God?

Isaiah saw the exaltation of Christ
" Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong " (v. 12). The cross led to the coronation ; the crucified became the conqueror. Isaiah had great eyes! He was also a great preacher! Excellent vision and effective preaching are born at Calvary.

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