LESSON ONE - ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

1. ISAIAH THE MAN

In John Oswalt's introduction to Isaiah in *The NIV Application Commentary*, he writes:

> Across the years Isaiah has come to be known as "the prince of the prophets." A part of the reason for this title is the possibility that the prophet was a member of the royal family.[1] While there is no indisputable evidence of this, the easy access to the kings that he seemed to enjoy may point in this direction. But the real basis of the claim is the nature of the book known by Isaiah's name. There is a majesty in the book that sets it off from almost any other in the Bible. It contains an unparalleled sweep of theology, all the way from creation to the new heavens and new earth and from utter destruction to glorious redemption.

Isaiah's name suited a prophet; it means "The Lord is salvation." Beyond the meaning of his name little is known. He labored mainly in and around Jerusalem where, as noted above, he had ready access to the kings. Among the Jews Isaiah was considered to be as great a prophet as Moses. Some suggest that this means that the Jews did not understand Moses' role in God's scheme of redemption; however, it could also be that that statement was not meant to demean Moses but to compliment Isaiah. Moses aside, Isaiah was considered to be special among the prophets because he received his prophecy from the mouth of God while others received the spirit of prophecy from their masters in the manner that Elijah's spirit fell upon Elisha. While this, too, seems to be overstatement, it does demonstrate the high esteem in which Isaiah was held.

[1] *Magillah*, 10:2. Some contend that he was the nephew of King Uzziah (or Azariah) who ruled Judah from 792 – 740 B.C.

Isaiah was married. His wife is unnamed, but is called a prophetess (8:3). They had two sons, Shear-jashub (*a remnant shall return)* and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (*the spoil speeds, the prey hastens*). Their names were both prophetic and were used by Isaiah in his prophecy.

Isaiah had a long life. He lived through the prosperous years of Uzziah and Jotham when the country was militarily strong. He lived through the declining years of Ahaz and the alliance with Assyria and its accompanying financial burden. He continued through the ups and downs of Hezekiah's reign. Isaiah 1:1 speaks of Isaiah's seeing visions in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. While Manasseh is not mentioned, 37:38 mentions the death of Sennacherib and the accession of Esarhaddon in 681. There is weak Jewish tradition[2] that Isaiah was sawn asunder under Manasseh, son of Hezekiah. (The author of Hebrews may have had this in mind in Heb. 11:37.) There is another legend that he was swallowed up by a tree that had to be sawed in pieces before he could be killed. His hiding place in the tree was discovered because the tree had failed to swallow up the hem of his garment. Some scholars contend that Manasseh reigned as co-regent with his father Hezekiah for some ten years. This may account for Isaiah's failure to mention Manasseh while some of Isaiah's strong language perfectly describes the evil of Manasseh's day.

We learn from Isaiah's writings that he was a statesman with extensive knowledge of the political situation of his day. He was an advisor to kings and with God he stood on equal ground with them. He did not hesitate to tell them what was good; neither did he fear to tell them was evil. He had to deal with the increasing threat of Assyria as well as with Egypt, the great crocodile to the southwest. While Egypt's star was fading, it was not going to give up its glory without a fight. Clearly there were three political parties – the Egyptian party (let's make a deal" with Egypt against Assyria), the Assyrian party ("let's make a deal" with Assyria to save ourselves), and the Jehovah

[2] The account is found in the pseudepigraphic work, *The Ascension of Isaiah,* 5:1-16, (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed.. Doubleday, 1985, p. 156-176,) Justin Martyr in *Dialogue with Trypho*, C. 120, censured the Jews of Isaiah that they "sawed [him] asunder with a wooden saw."

party (a nationalist party led by Isaiah who stressed that loyalty to the Lord as the only hope of salvation).

Isaiah was a reformer who constantly called the people from the errors of their way and pointed them to Jehovah who was the only source of salvation. The corruption, oppression, and immorality of the people must cease. If Judah was to avoid destruction it must turn learn to "wait for Jehovah" (8:17; 40:31) and follow his ways rather than the evil ways of their priests and kings.

Isaiah was a theologian without equal. His vision of God must surely account in part if not in whole for his dedication and unreserved commitment to the service of Jehovah. He saw God as king. He saw him exalted above all creation, absolute in holiness and righteousness, and controller of nations and their destiny. *Righteousness* (50) and *justice* (29), the two principles that always characterize God's actions, are found often in his prophecy. He spoke of the coming Messiah's birth (7:14) and declared that the One who was to come would be "Immanuel" (God with us) and reveal to us the true nature of God. Many of the prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, but no other expressed the concept of and the insight into the Redeemer with the depth of Isaiah. This does not mean that the other prophets should be neglected; it means only that one of the prophets, Isaiah, was chosen by God to declare the Messiah's coming and nature in a special way.

Isaiah had other writings than the letter bearing his name. 2 Chronicles speaks of an account of the acts of Uzziah (26:22) as well as a "vision that detailed "the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds" (32:32).

Jan Veleton the Younger said of Isaiah:

> Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity, and his mouth and hands in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in the very definite moment of history."

Homer Hailey wrote, "Truly Isaiah may be called the dean of all the prophets.

2. ISAIAH THE BOOK

A. WHO WROTE ISAIAH?

What difference does it make who wrote the book of Isaiah? We have the book. We have the prophecy. What need we more? This reasoning may satisfy those who are afraid that Isaiah may not have written the entire book, and, as a result, are afraid to investigate its authorship. However, surrendering its authorship has serious negative results. The prophecy claims Isaiah as its author. The New Testament, as we shall see, affirms Isaiah's authorship; it quotes more from Isaiah than it does from all of the other prophecies combined. While this may be accounted for in part by Isaiah's 66 chapters, that is not the entire answer since all of the other prophetic books together contain more than 66 chapters. In its use of Isaiah, the New Testament affirms that Isaiah is its author. Thus, the issue of Isaiah's authorship involves another issue – the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Isaiah's authorship was not questioned for centuries. The first serious question was raised in 1780. In 1789 a more comprehensive denial was published (Doederlein) that contended that Isaiah did not write chapters 40-66. This position began to gain support from other "higher critics" and is still espoused by some modern commentators (perhaps a majority). As others joined in the fray, other questions were raised. For example, it soon dawned on some that if Isaiah could not have written chapters 40-66 because of what was said about Babylon, then neither could he have written those portions of chapters 1-39 that mention Babylon nor could they be attributed to him. That raised still other questions. If Isaiah did not write these chapters, who did?

By the beginning of the 19th century there were two basic views of authorship. There was the traditional view that considered the N.T.'s affirmation of Isaiah's authorship to be authoritative and thus contended that Isaiah was the author of the entire book. The "higher critics" took a different course, denying Isaiah's authorship but differing on who

and how many wrote the book. Some contended that one man wrote the entire book but denied that that man was Isaiah. Some contended that chapters 40-66 were a unified whole, but that a "Second-Isaiah" was the author. Others contended that chapters 40-66 were not a unified whole and, depending on the critic, were written by both a Second and a Third-Isaiah. Some even added a Fourth-Isaiah. Thus, confusion reigned among the higher critics.

There were early defenses of the unity of Isaiah such as Charles Cutler Torrey. He defended Isaiah's authorship except for chapters 36-39. Unfortunately, his work contained some rather excessive positions that prevented wide acceptance of his work. In 1943 Edward J. Kissane published a defense of Isaiah's authorship of 40-66 that responded logically and forcefully to some of the later denials, especially as they pertained to a Third-Isaiah. Other works followed this, such as Oswald T. Allis's *Thy Word Is Truth* (1950) and his two commentaries (three volumes) on Isaiah that cogently defend the unity of Isaiah.

B. WHY IS THE UNITY OF ISAIAH DENIED?

The reason is simple – if Isaiah was written when and by whom it claims to have been written it is clear that Isaiah spoke clearly and accurately of events that were hundreds of years in the future, even to the small details of naming a man (Cyrus) who had not been born. More importantly, he clearly identified the coming and ancestry of the Messiah, accurately describing the nature of his birth and the circumstances of his death. This means that something or someone supernatural had to be involved. The only way that prophecy can be fulfilled is that it comes from someone who knows what is going to happen and who has the power to make it happen. The God whom Isaiah served and of whom he spoke is such a Person. Thus, to admit the authorship of Isaiah is to admit the existence of a supernatural God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and who can and did intervene miraculously upon the earth. This the higher critics deny. Thus they must deny Isaiah's authorship and find (or create out of thin air) an author who lived within or after the events of which Isaiah writes.

1. WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THE UNITY OF ISAIAH?

a. THE WITNESS OF TRADITION

1) The apocryphal book of *Ecclesiasticus*. The writer speaks of the work of Isaiah in a manner that at least implies that he had a copy of Isaiah before him having much the same form that it presently exists. It dates from the second century B.C. He speaks of things that came from chapters 40, 49, and 61 and ascribes them to Isaiah. Thus by the time *Ecclesiasticus* was written Isaiah's authorship was well established.

2) *The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah*. This scroll is a part of a discovery of manuscripts discovered near the northwestern end of the Dead Sea in Palestine. They are sometimes referred to as the Qumran manuscripts because they were found in caves near the Wady Qumran. The discovery was made known in 1948. Most acknowledge that they date from the late second century B.C.[3] Chapter 39 concludes just one line from the bottom of a page, leaving space for about eight letters. Chapter 40 begins on the last line of the page with no special indention, leaving no break (much less an unusual break) between the chapters. There can be no doubt that the book existed as a whole in the second century B.C. This makes it exceedingly difficult to defend the theory that the second portion of the book was not Isaiah's. Bernard Duhm is one of the strongest modern deniers of Isaiah's authorship of chapters 40-66. One can but wonder how he now feels about his theory since one of his prime contentions has been that the book of Isaiah did not exist in its present form until the first century B.C.

3) THE STRENGTH OF TRADITION

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[3] As far as dating, it appears that pieces of the Great Isaiah Scroll (1Qls-a) have been carbon-14 dated at least four times, including a study at the University of Arizona in 1995 and a study at ETH-zurich in 1990-91. The four studies produced calibrated date ranges between 335-324 BC and 202-107 BC. There have also been numerous paleographic and scribal dating studies conducted that place 1Qls-a at a date range of approximately 150-100 BC. (See Price, *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1996; Eisenman & Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*, 1994; Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?*, 1995; Wise, Abegg & Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, A New Translation*, 1999.)

Some critics contend that whoever wrote chapters 40-66 was the real originator of monotheism. If you (falsely) assume that that is true, this unknown was truly one of Israel's greatest prophets. He was certainly greater that Isaiah the son of Amoz. Surely we should find his name somewhere. Surely his name was known in the second century B.C., but there is not a suggestion of hint in *Ecclesiasticus* as to his identity while, as noted above, he does mention Isaiah. Moreover, he says of him that "he was great and faithful in his vision . . . who saw by an excellent spirit" (original Hebrew, "by the spirit of might"), which Isaiah said was to rest only on the Messiah (11:2). Without question the author of *Ecclesiasticus* is attributing the highest of praise to Isaiah. What could possibly have caused the 8th century Isaiah who, according to critics, is by no means the greatest of prophets, to receive such praise? On the other hand, what could possibly have caused the reputation of the Second (or Third or Fourth) Isaiah whom the critics contend wrote chapters 40-66 and who portrayed the most exalted doctrine of God the world had ever heard to that point, to fade so rapidly that by the time of *Ecclesiasticus* both his reputation and his name were unknown? The critics have largely ignored this question and those who have attempted to respond have presented no reasonable or unanswerable arguments.

LESSON TWO - ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH, CONTINUED

One of the strongest arguments came from the pen of Edward Kissane who postulated that the author of chapters 40-66 so respected Isaiah that he wrote it in the language of Isaiah and gave him credit by attaching Isaiah's name to his own writings. This accounts for the anonymity of the Second Isaiah, but there is something far more important for which it does not account. The theory is contrary to all that the Bible says about prophecy. The prophet was a spokesman for the Lord (Deut. 18:18-22). How were the hearers to test the prophet's accuracy if they did not know his name? This is especially true when the message is a written message whose author is unseen by his readers. If it is argued that that is all the more reason to attach "Isaiah," whose name is

well known, the response is that those who know it well would also know that he had been dead for some 200 years! Why should they believe a forged prophecy that began with a lie if they either knew who the author was or began with a question mark if the author was unknown?

Finally, Second, Third, and Fourth Isaiahs and all participants in the "Isaiah School" remain unidentified. That is amazing, especially for Second Isaiah who is, by many of his proponents, touted as the greatest prophet who ever lived, the most spiritual of them all, and the one who provided us with the greatest vision of the nature of God. It is difficult to see how he could have been the most spiritual of all and have the greatest understanding of Yahweh and His nature, while at the same time "stealing" the name of Isaiah and leading his readers to believe that that which he wrote was from Isaiah ben Amoz. The argument in chapters 41-48 for the nature of God compared with gods of wood and stone is Yahweh's ability to tell the future and control events to bring them to pass. What does it say for these "authors" if, at the same time they were writing of a God who could tell and control the future, they knew that the one to whom they attributed authorship did not write that which they were attributing to him? Is their credibility not completely undermined and their theology destroyed?

The conclusion is that the critics have not only been unable to establish a convincing argument for Second, Third, and Fourth Isaiahs, they have also failed to account for the establishment and centuries long held tradition of Isaiah's authorship.

Much more could be said about the authorship of Isaiah. Entire volumes have been written asking "Who Wrote Isaiah?" However, this will suffice for our purposes. The words of John N. Oswalt will conclude our discussion:

> All of the multiple authorship hypotheses finally undercut this theological point [4] because their underlying rationale

[4] The theological point is "that the book was written by Isaiah the son of Amoz in the 8th and 7th centuries and was gifted by God to see the future in such a way that

is that God *could not* have so inspired Isaiah ben Amoz. It seems we cannot have it both ways. If we conclude the theological claims of the book are true, then we cannot avoid the implications of that conclusion for the book's authorship. If we conclude the book was created by a group of persons much later than Isaiah, then we are forced to admit that these persons knew what they were saying was not true but believed it ought to be true and thus tried to create such an account of the book's origins as would make readers believe it was. Such a book may still be an inspiring piece of theological innovation that is of interest to historical theologians, but it has no claims upon those of us who read it 2,700 years later.[5]

4) THE USE OF ISAIAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Summary of the New Testament Evidence[6]

(Quotations from Isaiah by name

SOURCE	MANNER OF INTRODUCING QUOTATION	PASSAGE QUOTED	SOURCE Whether in the alleged 1st, 2nd, 3rd Isaiah
Matthew			
3:3	the prophet Isaiah	40:3	2
8:17	Isaiah the prophet	53:4	2 (3)
12:17	Isaiah the prophet	42:1	2
13:14	the prophecy of Isaiah	6:9, 10	1
15:7	Isaiah prophesied	29:13	1
Mark			
1:2	in Isaiah the prophet	40:3	2
7:6	Isaiah prophesied	29:13	1
Luke			
3:4	in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet	40:3-5	2
4:17	the book of the prophet Isaiah	61:1, 2	3

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it would forever demonstrate that Yahweh of Israel was not one of the gods, but was THE GOD who was able to tell the future in detail, the ultimate evidence that he was the Creator of creation, the One who made it, continued to direct it, and would ultimately redeem it."

[5] *The NIV Application Commentary*, p. 41

[6] *Introduction to the Old Testament,* Edward J. Young, p. 203

John			
1:23	The prophet Isaiah	40:3	2
12:38	Isaiah the prophet	53:1	2 (3)
12:39	Isaiah said again	6:9, 10	1
12:41	Isaiah – said – saw - spake	53:1; 6:9, 10	2
Acts			
8:28	reading Isaiah the prophet	53:7, 8	2 (3)
8:30	reading the prophet Isaiah	53:7, 8	2 (3)
8:32	the passage of the scripture[7]	53:7, 8	2(3)
28:25	Well spake the Holy Ghost through Isaiah the prophet	6:9, 10	1
Romans[8]			
9:27	Isaiah cries	10:22, 23; 11:5	1
9:29	As Isaiah said before	1:9	1
10:16	Isaiah says	53:1	2 (3)
10:20	Isaiah becomes bold and says	65:1	3

5) THE DATE OF ISAIAH

The date of Isaiah can be fairly ascertained by his description of the historical periods that he describes in 1:1 – "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." As mentioned above there is indication that his preaching was extended into the reign of Manasseh; however, that could have been a reference to a co-regency with his father, Hezekiah. The following chart provides the dates:

NAME	DATES OF REIGN
Azariah/Uzziah	792-740
Jotham	750-732[9]

[7] Note that the background of this incident illustrates and fulfills Isa. 56:3-7 (3)

[8] Note that Romans 9 and 10 contain many allusions to and echoes of the language of Isaiah

[9] Note the 10-year gap between Uzziah and Jotham, his son. Most likely there was a co-regency during those 10 years. 2 Chron. 26:18-21 records that Uzziah was struck with leprosy for attempting to offer incense in the temple. Zechariah 14:15 and Amos 1:1 speak of an earthquake in the days of Uzziah. Josephus states that it occurred when Uzziah was arguing with the priests in the holy place. Josephus records such an earthquake, Chapter IX, 4, as occurring at the same time that Uzziah was engaged in this violation of God's law.

Ahaz	735-715
Hezekiah	715-686

Jim Mcguiggan provides a chart of who reigned when during the period:[10]

Judean Kings	Israelite Kings	Assyrian Kings
Amaziah: 798-782	Jehoash: 798-782	Tiglathlilesar: 745-726
Uzziah: 792-740	Jereboam II: 793-753	Shalmaneser V: 726-722
Jotham: 750-732	Menahem: 752-742	Sargon II: 722-705
Ahaz: 735-715	Pekah: 752-732	Sennacherib: 705-681
Hezekiah: 715-686	Hoshea: 732-723/2	Esarhaddon: 681-669
Mahasseh: 697-642		Ashurbanipal: 669-627

Other lists could be given that have slightly different dates for the reigns of Judean and Israelite kings. These are given to show the approximate dates of the prophecy of Isaiah. It is not clear when Isaiah penned some of the prophecy. What is clear is that his ministry took place in the last half of the 8th century and, for those who do not accept the late dates of writing by "many Isaiahs," the writing took place during the same period. What time indications there are in the Prophecy of Isaiah will be discussed as we study further.

6) THE CONCURRENT HISTORY OF ISAIAH

a. We don't know much about Isaiah. Most of what we know is garnered from the 8th century prophecy that bears his name. We know that over 2,700 years ago, around 740 B.C.,[11] probably in the Temple, a man named Isaiah, who was the son of Amoz, received a call from God to serve him as a prophet. This call is recorded in chapter six which

[10] If you have a copy and check this chart you will find that the dates here are different. They have been modified to harmonize with the dates in the book in confidence that the dates in the chart in his book are typographical errors.

[11] This is a good time to learn that all dates given for the reigns, births, and deaths of the Kings of Judah and Israel are somewhat uncertain. The Hebrew calendar does not correspond to our January-December calendar. Additionally, the Old Testament uses two systems for dating the reigns of kings – one counting from the year of ascension and the other counting from the first full year following ascension. There were also a number of co-regencies where both father and son reigned.

indicates that Isaiah, like some of the other prophets, is not always concerned with being chronological. If this was the beginning of his prophecy and if he died early in Manasseh's reign, his ministry probably covered 740 – 690 B.C., or some 50 years.

Judah, where Isaiah prophesied, was one of the smallest of countries. Israel, though larger, was still a small country. Together they occupied a strategic position on the land routes from the Far East, through Central Asia, to Africa. Judah's smallness did not prevent it from asserting to the rest of the world that its God, Yahweh, was the creator of the entire universe, controlling and reigning over it all.

By this time Egypt was pretty much a has-been that was unable to deal with Assyria. Assyria had ambitions, but was unable to realize them because it had problems of its own. There was a "hot spot" across its northern border; within its border it had problems with succession of its rulers – Shalmaneser died without a successor. Against this background, Uzziah's reign was able, for the most part, to be one of peace and prosperity.

Some five years before Uzziah's death (745 B.C.), Assyria solved its problems. Tiglath-Pileser III (also known as Pul, 2Kings 15:19; 1 Chron. 5:26; Isa. 66:19), a capable and ambitious man, came to power. He took control in Babylon and secured the northern border. Recognizing his power, other kings began paying tribute – Rezin (Damascus), Menahem (Israel), Hiram (Tyre). By the time of Uzziah's death, Assyria had rolled over everything between it and Judah.

In addition to the threat of Assyria, Judah was decaying internally. Wealth was concentrated in a few who had little concern for the poor. Justice was for sale to the highest bidder, which enabled the rich to defraud the poor, creating greater division among its people. Oppression was the practice of the day; religious obligations were ignored; spiritual decay characterized God's people.

Under Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah matters did not improve. Israel had one emergency after another. In 734 B.C. Pekah (King of Israel) entered into an alliance with Rezin of Damascus and tried to persuade

Ahaz to join. When Ahaz refused, Assyria and Israel joined forces against Ahaz to either make Judah a part of the alliance or replace Ahaz with a king who would join. Isaiah advised Ahaz to trust the Lord, but Ahaz chose to seek the protection of Tiglath-Pileser, thus becoming subject to Assyria. Assyrian subjection required heavy tribute, which, if Judah failed to pay, would bring severe punishment. The Israel-Damascus alliance fell in 732 B.C, followed by Samaria in 722 B.C. Israel became a province of an empire having a border only 8 miles from Jerusalem. Judah struggled. Its economy was in severe depression. Its existence depended on its submission to Assyria insofar as the human eye could see.[12] Any indication of Assyrian weakness created a hope of successful rebellion with Egypt's aid.[13] Isaiah speaks of one such rebellion by the Philistines in 711 B.C. (20:1). Apparently learning nothing from Ashdod's experience, Judah, tiring of the Assyrian yoke, rebelled. When Hezekiah ascended to the throne he was willing to risk refusing to pay the tribute.

Perhaps the stars were already aligned. After Sargon II died, rebellion quickly spread against Sennacherib, his successor (705-681). Babylon had already rebelled and hoped that Judah would join with it (39:1-2). With rebellion on its east and west, it appeared to be the ideal time for Judah to rebel. Hezekiah refused to pay tribute, forced the Philistines to join his rebellion (2 Kings 18:7-8), and prepared for battle.[14]

Unfortunately for Hezekiah and Judah, Sennacherib brought things under control more quickly than anticipated. In less than a year he had everything under control, including Babylon. By 701 B.C. he was ready to move west. The campaign was great in size and swift in action. Palestine was rolled over from the north (Sidon) to the south (Lachish) and Jerusalem was placed under siege. According to Sennacherib's annals, he knew that Hezekiah was a leader of the rebellion and he was determined that Hezekiah would suffer greatly. Egypt's

[12] Judah had abandoned dependence upon God and could not see what Isaiah saw.
[13] Egypt was enjoying somewhat of resuscitation at this time and seemed ready to participate in the rebellion.
[14] This was when he created a tunnel to bring fresh drinking water into Jerusalem (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:30).

apparent willingness faded and failed (37:9 – Ethiopian rulers controlled Egypt at the time.). All was over; Judah was doomed; all hope was gone!

Or was it? Isaiah heard (or learned) of the boasts of Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's field commander.[15] And whatever Hezekiah and his court may have believed and feared, Isaiah knew there was a God – the God – and that the battle truly belonged to the Lord. God, not Sennacherib, ruled Assyria. As one commentator wrote:

> Isaiah lived by the old creed. Ahaz and Hezekiah found it hard to translate into practical politics, the common people gave it only lip service, and Sennacherib mocked it as madness, but Isaiah charted his entire course by it.

Isaiah lived for his mission given by the God who called him. Chapters 1-39 deal primarily with two crises – 734 B.C. and 701 B.C.[16] Isaiah is

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[15] Some consider "Rabshakeh" to be a name. Other's consider it to be a military title equivalent to "field commander" which accounts for some translations of 36:2.

[16] The crisis of 701 B.C. relates to Sennacherib's campaign, recorded in Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Kings 18-20. Both texts state that the war occurred in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign. This creates a chronological problem because some place Hezekiah's ascension in 727/26 B.C. while others place it at 715 B.C. There are several suggestions for resolution. Some believe that Hezekiah was in co-regency with his father, Ahaz, from 727 to 715. This theory accords with God's addition of 15 years to Hezekiah's life. These 15 years would be from 701-686 B.C. One commentator suggests that "fourteenth year" should read "twenty-fourth" year. He admits that there is no textual support for this change. He argues that the ancient method of writing numbers made this type of error very easy. His example of such an error is 2 Chronicles 36:9 where Jehoiachin ascended the throne at eight years of age, whereas 2 Kings 24:8 gives the correct age at 18. Hebrew scholars Keil & Delitzsch support this conclusion by calling the "8 years" of 2 Chronicles 36:9 a "slip of the pen." John Oswalt, in *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, pp. 674-75, makes a strong argument for the "co-regency" stance:

> It appears that Hezekiah did begin to reign in 727/26, probably as co-regent with his father Ahaz. Furthermore, the Babylonian rebel Merodach-baladan seems to have been out of the picture by 703. Beyond this, it is inconceivable that the Babylonian envoys would have come to congratulate Hezekiah solely on his recovery if he had recently experienced a great deliverance from Assyria. Furthermore,

always true to his Lord who directs him and behind whom, in humility, he stands. Isaiah's prophecy is truly not about Isaiah.

Within some five years after Hezekiah's death, Manasseh, his son, turned away from Hezekiah's policies and led Judah farther away from God. He submitted to Assyria. Idol worship was the fashion of the day. According to tradition, Manasseh's men sawed Isaiah in two. As Isaiah declined physically, he reached his spiritual heights. During this period he wrote chapters 40-66. Here he looked into the future, seeing not only the Babylonian captivity of Judah and its return under Cyrus, but also the triumphant coming of the Messiah and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

7. THEMES TO LOOK FOR IN ISAIAH

> as Young [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2] and others point out, most of the temple treasures were stripped to pay the initial, abortive tribute to Sennacherib, leaving nothing to show the Babylonians if they came after that time. Finally, the dates of the Babylonian revolutionary Merodach-baladan . . . seem to confirm that the sickness did not occur after Sennacherib's attack, but before it.

Bryan E. Bayer, in *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, p. 143, outlines disadvantages of this theory:

> (1) it requires an assumption of a co-regency without specific evidence, though we do know Judah's kings often utilized them, (2) it requires 2 Kings 18 to have two different reference points for Hezekiah's reign in the space of a few verses, and (3) it requires the Babylonian delegation's visit in 713-712 BC (Hezekiah was given fifteen years of additional life, 38:5), which many have argued fits better around 703 BC.

Bayer's closing comments on the subject well states where all the discussion leaves us:

> All three interpretations [He adds a third to the two discussed here – the assumption that Hezekiah ruled later than some suggest. It is not widely held.] have their strengths and weaknesses, and the exact chronology of Hezekiah's reign remains difficult to determine. Interpretation 2 appears most likely [his personal position], though perhaps the appearance of further historical evidence will one day settle the matter.

a. God and History

Isaiah leaves no doubt about who created the universe, controls the earth, and governs nations – Yahweh. Moreover, he controls it in righteousness. He uses nations to punish his wayward people, but then punishes the very nations that he used because of their idolatry and viciousness. This doesn't mean that God gets everything that he wants. Some of God's promises, both for blessing and punishment, are conditional. Man's free will determines which of God's promises are fulfilled. See 2 Pet. 3:9.

b. God and Holiness

"The Holy One of Israel" is one of Isaiah's favorite descriptions of Yahweh. God is holy – free from sin. He desires (and demands) holiness from his people. Knowing their inability to attain it, he provides it for them through Jesus Christ.

c. God and the Remnant

God's remnant began with Noah, not Abraham. When Elijah was under the Juniper tree, God's remnant was described as 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:28). Isaiah often speaks of a remnant, but he does not always refer to the same thing when he uses it. He may refer to survivors of some judgment. He may refer to those who remain faithful in the face of widespread idolatry and law breaking. He may refer to the spiritual Israel that will exist after the establishment of the Lord's Kingdom. It is often difficult to determine his reference. It was the remnant of faithful Jews that led to God's preservation of national Israel (1:9; see also, Rom. 9:29; 11:25).

All uses of "remnant" have one thing in common – they emphasize the glory of God in his faithfulness to his commitment, particularly thorough Abraham, that through his seed all nations would be blessed. Abraham grew into Israel and, through Israel, in spite of its disobedience, came David, and, in spite of his disobedience, through David's descendants came the Messiah. Instead of eliminating a rebellious people (1:9), God left himself a remnant (Rom. 11:14). When the Kingdom was at hand Jesus made clear that the physical seed of Abraham

was no longer either the sons of Abraham or the sons of God. Their father was the Devil (John 8:37-45).

d. God and the Servant

Once again we are dealing with a term that Isaiah uses to refer to different things (*e.g.*, Isaiah – 20:3; Eliakim – 22:20; David – 37:35; the spiritual or righteous remnant – 65:8-9). Most importantly it is used of the Messiah (42:14; 52:13-53:12 and the New Testament uses of these passages).

Keep these different uses in mind and read carefully as we study through the book. We will find that commentators don't always agree and definitive conclusions may not always be reached.

e. God and the Elect

Twelve times in his prophecy Isaiah uses the terms "elect" and "chosen." "Called" is used at times as a synonym for "chosen." The terms are used of individuals (Abraham – 51:2; Cyrus – 45:4) and Judah (See 41:8-9; 43:1, 7, 10, 21; 44:1-2; 65:15). The concept runs from Genesis to the Messiah because God was working to bring salvation to his creation. F.F. Bruce stated it beautifully (*New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, p. 62):

> When the crucial test came, the faithful remnant was reduced to one person, the Son of Man who entered death single-handed and rose again as his people's representative."

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON THREE

Section One: Discourses and Prophecies Centering in Jerusalem and Judah

CHAPTER ONE

(Vv. 1- 20) Isaiah's Personal Introduction to His Book

The first chapter of Isaiah is an introduction to the entire prophecy. If you understand it you are in position to understand the entire prophecy. Isaiah does not always use the same words. However, if you keep this chapter in mind you will find that when you run into difficulty understanding Isaiah a return to this chapter will help you decipher at least the subject with which Isaiah is dealing. A second step will be to put that which Isaiah is discussing into the proper historical context provided in the Introduction.

The outline that you have divides chapter one into:

1) Introduction (1);

2) The sin-sick rebellious nation (2-9);

3) Corruption and hypocritical worship (10-15);

4) God's call to reformation of life (16-20);

5) The lament over Jerusalem (21-23);

6) Redemption through purging (24-31).

Edward J. Young, in his three-volume commentary on Isaiah, provides four basic themes of Isaiah's prophecy from the chapter:

1) The sinfulness of Judah and Jerusalem (3-8);

2) The tender appeals of the Lord (16-19);

3) The certainty of the coming judgment (24,25, 29-31);

4) The blessedness of the salvation to come (26, 27).

Bryan Bear, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, provides this breakdown of chapter 1:

1) God's Witness against the People (2-3);

2) God's Description of the People (4-9)

3) God's Indictment of the People;

4) God's solution for the People (16-20);

5) God's Lament over the People (21-26);

6) God's Promise to His People (27-31).

Given the significance of the first chapter we will spend more time on it and then move more rapidly through the remaining 65 chapters so that we can finish our study within the 24 weeks available for classes in the two quarters allotted for our study.

Verse 1 – Introduction.

Some prefer not to call verse 1 an introduction (see Byer's outline above that omits reference to v. 1); however, whatever it is denominated, even Beyer admits that it "prepares readers well for the prophetic words that lie ahead."

The author identifies himself as Isaiah the son of Amoz,[17] and affirms that he saw a vision (the vision is the same as the word that Jehovah spoke, 2:1).[18] He thus asserts that the message is not his own but is the message that God delivered to him. In other words, the message that Isaiah proclaimed was of divine origin; it was inspired.[19] A prophet of God spoke the word that God gave him (Deut. 18:18-19). The vision that Isaiah received concerned Judah and Jerusalem, including the 10 northern tribes of Israel (9:1-10:9). It even extended to the heathen na-

[17] How can you not like a man who lists his father's name when, as far as the Bible is concerned, nothing is known about him. Once again, however, there is some ancient speculation that Amoz was the brother of Amaziah, the father of Uzziah, which would make him the cousin of Uzziah.

[18] "Of Isaiah" is not used to identify the originator or provider of the vision, but the recipient.

[19] "Vision" indicates specific visions, such as Isa. 29:7; Hos. 12:10; Hab. 2:2; 1 Chron. 17:15, *et al*, To say that he "saw" the vision is simply to say that he "saw" that which God had placed in his mind, *i.e.*, that which God had revealed to him. It includes everything that is in the book and declares that that content had its origin in God. It is often attributed to "the word of Jehovah." Here "vision" seems to be used collectively to refer to all of the contents of the prophecy.

tions to the extent that their conduct related to the people of God. Clearly Judah (occurs 29 times) and Jerusalem (occurs 49 times) are the center of the vision's attention.

The time frame is fixed as being in the days of Uzziah (aka "Azariah," 2 Kings 15). Isaiah's call is found in chapter 6 and the time given there is "the year that King Uzziah died." It may have been that Isaiah began his preaching in the last year of Uzziah's life. It is unclear whether Isaiah lived into the reign of Manasseh, but if so it was likely a period of writing his prophecies and other works that he did (See 2 Chron 26:22, "Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write," and 2 Chron 32:32, "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel."

Vv 2-9 – The Sin-sick Rebellious Nation

V. 2 – Isaiah calls on heaven and earth to give ear and hear; Jehovah is about to speak. His call is reminiscent of Moses call in his farewell address. In Deuteronomy 31:28-29 Moses gives the basis for such a call: after his death Israel "will utterly corrupt" itself and "turn aside from the way" that God had commanded. Isaiah now calls upon the same heaven and earth upon which Moses called to witness that that which Moses had predicted had come to pass in Isaiah's day. Commentators describe this scene as a court scene in which God is the prosecuting attorney and heaven and earth are his witnesses. These witness are important – they indicate that all is at risk in this rebellion against God. It has always been the case that the welfare of the world depends upon how God's creation responds to his word. It does not bode well for our day that this principle is as true now as it was then.

God begins by declaring that he had nourished and brought up children who had responded to his love by rebelling against him. He had brought them out of Egypt, created them a nation, led them through the wilderness, and provided them a promised land that flowed with milk and honey. At Sinai he had given them a law that they might know his will. For all of this they owed God the respect and honor due

a father; instead, God said, they rebelled[20] "against me." Whether we realize it or not all sin is ultimately a sin against God (Psalm 51:4).

Deut. 21:18-21 provided that the father of a rebellious son had power to bring that son before the elders and recommend that he be put to death; Judah was indeed in a precarious position! Its conduct was not some minor infraction. Judah had first departed from the law of God. That inward departure from the faith was followed by outward manifestation – rebellion and spiritual adultery. The greatness of Judah's sin was not just in the rebellion, but also in the fact that it was a rebellion of sons. Edward J. Young comments:

> When thus set in contrast with the free grace of God in adopting the nation and bringing it to maturity, the transgression of the people stands out in relief as the more heinous.

Vv. 3-9

V. 3

These rebellious sons were so unthinking that God could only compare them to animals generally considered as dumb brutes – the ox and the ass. Even though they are considered dumb they are smart enough to know where the barn is. Moreover, they knew it belonged to their master – the one who cared and provided for them. Judah did not understand. She did not understand the first thing about what it meant to follow God. Nevertheless, God still loved them. He said it was "my people" who did not consider. This description of Judah occurs 23 times in Isaiah, demonstrating that God is true to his promises and that he has not forsaken his people. He does care and will care for his chosen.

Vv. 4-9

[20] Rebellion is a major theme in Isaiah. Three different words are used in Chapter 1 to describe this rebellion. Vv. 2 and 28 have the concept of "political revolt"; vv. 5 and 23 have the concept of "turning aside" or "deviation"; v. 20 has the concept of "bitterness."

These verses describe Judah as God sees them in their rebellious state.[21] "Ah" may be translated "Alas." It is considered by some to convey the concept of lamentation, threat, or execration as it does in some passages of Isaiah. Here, however, some suggest that it also contains the concept of "pain, pity, wonder, and deep abhorrence at the unbelievable ingratitude of the nation" (Young). Even if the word itself does not contain the latter concepts, the context certainly coveys them.

Judah is a sinful nation burdened with the weight of sin (Heb. 12:1). They are the offspring of evildoers and their children have followed in their steps. The reason for their corruption is that they have forsaken Jehovah and despised the Holy One of Israel. As a result they have become estranged from God and they have moved in the wrong direction (v. 4).

In v. 5 Isaiah addresses the people directly. His first question can be understood in several ways. Some understand it to ask, "upon what part of the body will you be stricken[22]"; some "where can you be smitten with effect," *i.e.*, God hardly knows where he should strike, or the body is so wounded that there is no place remaining where it can be smitten; some argue that, since the administrator of punishment usually does not care where he strikes, render the Hebrew with "wherefore" or "why," with the meaning, "to what purpose will you be further stricken." The latter seems to have the most in its favor. Thus, Isaiah is not asking why God should further punish, but observing that further punishment will not accomplish anything, *i.e.*, it will not lead to repentance (see Amos 4:6-11). Isaiah's real purpose seems to be to tell his hearers that continued sin is the height of folly because it will continue to bring punishment upon them. WHAT THEN IS THE CURE? V. 6 tells us that the cure will not be found by continuing in their present conduct. The last part of verse 5 implies that the cure lies in a changed head and a changed heart – *the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.* The nation is sick both inwardly and outwardly. God is willing

[21] Isaiah has begun speaking in v. 4. However, these words are no less the words of God than vv. 2-3. God speaks through his inspired prophets.

[22] Some of the terms used here are used of the Suffering Servant in Chapter 53.

to cure the sick and strengthen the fainthearted, and will do so for the penitent remnant (Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 18:31; 36:26).

Vv. 7-8 These verses leave the metaphor of the body and moves to a discussion of the impact of the nation's transgressions on her land – the country is desolate, the cities are burned with fire, strangers who have overthrown the land and made it desolate enjoy that which should be enjoyed by God's people. There is not much left of the daughter of Zion:[23] she is as a booth in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden, as a city under siege. The strangers, unidentified here, were God's instrument of punishment.

> For these people the judgment of God was no mere theological abstraction, or something that existed somewhere else or might be experienced at some future time, as we tend to think of it. It was a very present, painful reality."[24]

The desolation has left the Daughter of Zion without protection. The booth in the vineyard and the lodge in the garden provide views to see danger, but there is no protection from the winds and storms, much less from an invading army. Jerusalem itself is cut off with no hope of assistance and no way of escape.

V. 9 proclaims that if Jehovah had not left for himself a remnant, the Daughter of Zion would have faded into history in the manner of Sodom and Gomorrah. God's mercy and his faithfulness to his promise had saved her from extinction. Judah would go into captivity, but a remnant would return (10:20-21); under the Messiah a remnant would be saved (Rom. 9:29).

Verses 10-15 – Corruption Hiding Behind Hypocritical Worship

Vv. 10-13

Once again Sodom and Gomorrah are in the picture. Isaiah calls upon the rulers of "Sodom" and the people of "Gomorrah" to hear the word

[23] Isaiah often uses "Daughter of Zion" as a metaphor for God's people, 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11.
[24] Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah,* Inter-Varsity Press, 1996, p. 42.

of Jehovah. The rebellion referred to in v. 2 is now specified: worship of Jehovah has been reduced to mere form with no concern for the fatherless and the widows, and no concern for loving God, loving obedience, or loving one another. Jehovah declares that he has had a sufficiency of their sacrifices and their burnt-offerings, and that he takes no delight in the blood of their offerings. His rejection is characterized by strong language – such oblations are vain and incense is an abomination. No amount of empty sacrifices could compensate for such loveless disobedience. From the beginning God was concerned for the poor and weak. It was that concern that led to his freeing them from Egypt (Ex. 2:23-25). It was that concern that led him to require his people to be concerned about the poor and weak among them (Ex. 22:21-24; see Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27).

God wants to know who it was that required these things at their hands and to trample (tread) his courts (the Temple) with such abominations. Did he not know? Did God himself not command sacrifices? The book of Leviticus describes the sacrifices and festivals that God commanded in detail (Lev. 1:1-7:38; 23:1-44) and God had not changed his mind. But neither had he changed his mind about mere formalism. Unquestionably God commanded sacrifices, but just as certainly he never had pleasure in sacrifices that were not accompanied by a right heart. King Saul learned this lesson the hard way: "22 And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Sam. 15:22-23)." The prophet Micah declared the same truth: "6 Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? 7 will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with

thy God" (Micah 6:6-8)? God declares that he cannot bear such empty worship anymore.[25]

The Daughter of Zion was now learning the same lesson. A serious question is whether we have learned the lesson. Surely the cross makes greater demand upon us than the Exodus did upon the Jews (see Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27).

Vv. 14-15

These verses continue the same theme. Jehovah hates the manner in which the festivals, weekly Sabbaths, monthly New Moons, and the solemn feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Fest of Tabernacles) were observed. He declares that he is weary of bearing them. As with sacrifices, God ordained these days in the law, the manner in which they were observed had become as detestable as offering a dog or a pig (cf. 66:3). In v. 15 we find the reason for God's rejection of their worship. Isaiah says that since their uplifted hands are full of blood, they might as well cease praying because Jehovah will not even look at them, much less hear them.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? The problem is that they were using their worship (religious behavior) to manipulate God. If they will just bring more sacrifices, observe more festivals and Sabbaths, God will somehow be in debt to them and will have to bless them rather than punish them. With that approach, we feel that we are in control and that by our religious actions we can somehow obtain for ourselves the blessings that we seek. But God cannot be manipulated by any human activity. Nothing that we can do can put God in our debt. But if that is the case, then how can helping the poor, the widows and the orphans, dealing justly and lovingly with our fellow man, and walking righteously before our God have any affect upon our standing with God. Simple. Because such conduct is his will and expresses his own nature and character. If God's people want to walk with him they must agree to act like him.

[25] Young says that the last clause in v. 13 can be rendered, "I cannot bear iniquity and the solemn meeting."

WHAT WOULD HE SAY TO US TODAY? Listen to what Jim McGuiggan postulates it might be:[26]

> I'm tired of your mid-week Bible studies. Your worship assemblies make me ill. Your Lord's suppers are an irritant and an offense to me. I want no more of your assemblies. Who asked you to come to church? Your Sunday Schools are an abomination and your collections I loathe."

Impossible, you say. If we, like Israel, think that we are entitled to favorable treatment because we have God's revealed way of doing things, we had better think again. If our behavior is no different than the behavior of the world, our fate will be no different either.

Vv. 16-20 – God's Call to Reformation of Life

Vv. 16-17

In vv. 16-17 there are eight short imperative statements that call the people to reformation of life: 1) Wash you, make you clean; 2) put away your evil; 3) cease to do evil; 4) learn to do well; 5) seek justice; 6) relieve the oppressed; 7) judge the fatherless; and 8) plead for the widow. The covenant that contains the laws of sacrifice is the same covenant that contains the laws of moral and ethical treatment of the poor and oppressed. Neither has any value without the other. It is not possible for correct ritual to deliver us from the consequences of evil deeds.

Vv. 18-20

These three verses have been called one of the most famous expressions of the grace of God in the Bible. At the very point that all seems lost, grace intervenes. Although we are familiar with the KJV translation, "Come now, and let us reason together," some commentators feel that "reason" is too mild a word and suggest that God is calling for his people to "argue" their position. Use your best thinking, he says. If disobedience (rebellion and stubbornness) results in destruction (v. 20), and another type of conduct (obedience and changed living) re-

[26] *The Book of Isaiah*, pp. 62-63.

sults in forgiveness and restoration (18-19), which choice is the better course? Even an ox or an ass (1:3) should be able to figure that out. The divine judge is willing to reason with the rebel and makes an offer that is truly amazing – total pardon (v. 18). But the rebel must come to the table. However v. 18 is understood, "Come" is an imperative. What they had tried to obtain by manipulation is now offered to them freely, but conditionally. They need only cease their rebellion. The choice is theirs. The Lord is gracious, but he is not one to be trifled with.

THE WRATH OF GOD

That which has been discussed in these verses raises questions concerning God's wrath. John Oswalt has a good brief discussion of it that should be kept in mind as we study through Isaiah[27]:

> Isaiah's emphasis upon rebellion as an offense against nature speaks to the meaning of the *wrath of God.* Two extremes need to be opposed here. The one is the picture of God as a raging, red-faced tyrant who dares anyone to oppose his arbitrary decrees. But God's decrees in the matters of the spirit are not more arbitrary than those in the realm of the physical. If I choose to smash my car into a brick wall while traveling at 100 miles per hour, I will most certainly experience the wrath of God—the natural results of my unnatural act. As someone has said, I will not have broken any natural laws, only demonstrated them. The same is true in the spiritual realm. If I live in ways contrary to my nature, I will experience the destructive results of my behavior. In this sense, the *wrath of God* is a metaphor, as is the *love of God.*
>
> But this understanding can lead to an opposite error, namely, that God is without personality, a benign but unfeeling unmoved Mover. The whole import of Scripture is

[27] *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 89 (Eerdmans, 1986).

> opposed to such a view. If God is anything, he is a Person, intimately and passionately involved with his creatures. His emotions are neither fickle nor arbitrary; they are real and deep. His hatred of sin is as intense as his approval of righteousness is profound.
>
> Thus a genuinely biblical view of God's response to sin must always hold these two extremes in tension. On the one hand, he does not respond out of arbitrary rage, but on the other hand, he does respond personally and directly.

This raises another question. What right does God have to set boundaries and standards and punish if they are not met. Throughout Isaiah we will see the same four bases that are implied in these verses:

1. He is **The** Holy One of Israel. There is no other holy being; there is no other God. That which the pagans worshipped were not God; they were at best gods, and at worst pieces of wood, metal, or stone. Since they were in fact the latter, they could never become the former.

2. He is Creator God. He created and set up the boundaries for the heaven and earth, the two witnesses that he called. Since he created man, does he not also have the right to set his boundaries and standards?

3. He is the covenant God. God entered into a covenant relationship with man. He committed himself to his creation and to the fulfillment of promises made to them. In return, he calls upon us to commit ourselves to him.

4. He is God the Father. We are neither mere objects nor mere subjects to God—we are children (1:2; 1 John 3:1-2). It is as a loving father that he sets guidelines and boundaries for his children.

When we rebel, we rebel against **The** Holy One (the only God), the creator God, the covenant God, and our heavenly Father. Sadly, when we rebel in disobedience of the guidelines and standards that our God has set, we want mercy rather than the consequences that are the natural results of our disobedience. What we fail to understand is that there

are consequences to breaking spiritual laws just as there are consequences to breaking physical laws.[28] If we plunge off a tall building death is almost certainly the outcome. Our survivors, or we ourselves should we survive, don't blame the law of gravity. It makes no more sense to blame God when, having violated his guidelines and standards, the consequences of our unnatural act fall upon us. After all, Man was created to live in harmony with God and according to his will. It is as unnatural for man's nature to disobey God's law as it is to disobey the law of gravity. Self-determination is contrary to the essence of both God and man. But if that is so, is man not reduced to a mere robot that must mindlessly follow God's will. As Paul would say to such a mistaken concept, "God forbid." The alternative to rebellion is not mechanical obedience. God has not prescribed every action for us. What he had done is to define the outer limits beyond which we cannot go without hurting ourselves. The law of gravity does not render us mindless robots; neither does the law forbidding lying or stealing. The law requiring us to breathe oxygen does not make us mindless robots; so neither do the commands to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized for the remission on sins. They just tell us the boundaries within which we must live and the things that we are to do and not do if we are not to hurt ourselves either physically or eternally.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON FOUR

CHAPTER ONE (Vv. 21- 31)

Vv. 21-23 – The Lament over Jerusalem

When Saul and Jonathan died in battle with the Philistines, David composed his "How the Mighty Have Fallen" lament (2 Sam. 1: 19-27). Three times in these verses he cried, "how the mighty are fallen" (vv. 19, 25, 27). In these verses Isaiah raises a lament over Jerusalem in

[28] Remember what was said above, that we don't "break physical laws; we demonstrate their inviolability and the consequences that always accompany refusing to follow them.

which he contrasts the Jerusalem of his day with that which it had been and that which God intended for it to be. In essence he is saying, "How the mighty are fallen." The faithful city is now a harlot; the city once occupied by the just and the righteous is now occupied by murderers; the silver has become dross; the wine is diluted with water; the princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; bribes are common business and no one does anything without a reward; they neglect the fatherless and ignore the cause of the widow, taking bribes to deny her justice. There is no pay in care for the helpless.

Almost unnoticed in this scandalous list of unethical and immoral conduct is the fact that it begins at the top of society – her princes or leaders. Its leaders often dictate a society's direction and Jerusalem was no exception. Its rulers did not judge criminals but associated with them and took bribes from them while ignoring the helpless. Judah has indeed gone backward (1:4). There is no repentance.

Vv. 24-31 – Redemption Through Purging

God had called Judah to reason. The invitation was not only rejected; Judah moved farther and farther away. Thus Jehovah now speaks not as the Holy One of Israel but as the Mighty One of Israel. Now there is no call to reason; judgment has come. The Mighty one of Israel will do away with his adversaries and enemies (v. 24). He will turn against them and purge them with fire to remove their dross (v. 25). Once they have been purged he will replace their judges and counselors so that righteousness will once again characterize Zion (v. 26). Zion will be redeemed with justice and her converts redeemed with righteousness (v. 27). The end of the unrighteous will be far different. Transgressors and sinners will be consumed together; they shall be ashamed of their oaks[29] and their gardens[30] will confound them (vv. 28-29). Indeed, the idolaters will be like their oaks and their gardens – the one is dead and

[29] The transgressors and sinners were idolaters. Their "oaks" (or terebinths) were either their idols or the wood from which their idols were made.
[30] The places used for idolatrous worship that they have chosen in preference to Jehovah.

the other parched. Only a spark will ignite them and they shall both burn with unquenchable fire (vv. 30-31).

For once, little comment is needed on these self-explanatory verses. However, that does not mean that no comment is appropriate. First, Isaiah again emphasizes that true religion before God the Father has always and continues to possess the quality of mercy and charity toward the helpless. We must have a love relationship with God that separates us from the world and leads us to walk in his ways, one of which is love for our fellow man. In other words, a religion that is forensic only has never been acceptable to God.

Second, God never punishes just because he can. Punishment is never an end within itself, but is a means to an end[31]. God does not punish unless punishment is deserved. Deserved punishment is administered in love and always seeks the good of his children. Additionally, even when judgment is deserved God often defers it as long as he can, seeking purification without punishment. But when the "Come, let us reason together" invitation is rejected God has only two choices: send the transgressor away to die in his sin, or purge by punishment that leads to repentance and avoids perdition. He chose the latter course with Judah, but as we shall see, it was only a remnant that was redeemed.

Third, Isaiah warns of a sense of false security. This is a theme that we shall see throughout his prophecy. Isaiah is concerned that if his hearers heard only good things they would feel secure in their present life, sensing no need for repentance. Isaiah was not a false prophet who led his hearers to conclude that all was well with them and that they did not need to deal with their sin because there was no sin with which to deal. He was a true prophet who told them what they needed to hear. He consistently told them that God would keep his promises to Abraham and to Abraham's seed, but he also told them that if they continued in their sin without repentance they would have no part in those promises.

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[31] Even final judgment bringing final punishment has a purpose beyond the event. It glorifies Jehovah's nature and being, especially his holiness that cannot look upon sin

CHAPTER TWO

Vv. 1-4 – JERUSALEM: THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

V. 1

Isaiah again introduces himself. In chapter 1 he saw the vision. Here he sees the word. There is no difference. Judah and Jerusalem are the subject of both. Isaiah is the recipient of both. How can one "see" the word? The word is "seen" by being received and understood. It may also be a reference to the source of the word. God spoke to him in a vision. While the Messiah is not mentioned in these verses, it is clear that this language applies to the Messianic period. It is to Jehovah's house that the Messiah is to come. Mount Zion is where the house is to be established and from which Jehovah's law and word will go forth.

v. 2

The big question here is the meaning of "the last days." The Hebrew scholar Delitsch says that the term never refers to the time immediately following its use, but applies to the furthest point that lies on the outermost point on the speaker's horizon. Young says that it refers to that which is hindmost or farthermost. It may have a spatial meaning[32] or a temporal meaning. A temporal meaning could be either chronological or suggest that there is a process which will come to fruition when the last days have come. It is clearly this latter sense in the Old Testament. God's eternal purpose to redeem fallen man through Jesus Christ was being worked out and that process would be completed in "the last days."

That this so can be seen from others uses in the Old Testament and fulfillment in the New Testament. Some 150 years after Isaiah the prophet Daniel used the same term. In Daniel 2:28 Daniel wrote that "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and he hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Daniel's revelation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream continued through

[32] In Psalm 139:9 it refers to the uttermost parts of the sea.

the 4 kingdoms until the culmination of the process was reached in 2:44 which disclosed the establishment of a kingdom that would never be destroyed. *The latter days* were to be during the reign of the kings of Rome.

The New Testament confirms this fact. In Acts 2:17 Peter disclosed what Joel meant by the word "afterwards" in Joel 2:28. Peter said that what Joel had prophesied was being fulfilled in *the last days.* In Acts 3:24 Peter, speaking of events that occurred with Christ's incarnation (first coming) said that all of the prophets from Samuel and after "told of these days." There can be no doubt that Peter considered *the last (latter) days* to be in his lifetime.

Most significant, the New Testament says that Isaiah 2:2-4 was fulfilled in New Testament days. Christ himself quoted Isaiah 2 and said that his apostles "were witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-49). Since the apostles were witnesses of events that prophecy said would occur in *the last days*, there can be no doubt that *the last days* were then occurring.

Daniel 2:44 described it as a kingdom established by God that shall never be destroyed. Isaiah 2:2 calls it "the mountain of the Lord's house." One need not speculate about the meaning of "the mountain of the Lord's house" because Zechariah 8:3 defines it: Thus saith Jehovah: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, The holy mountain." It is plain that Isaiah 2 and Daniel 2 meet and merge in Hebrews 12 which describes Christians as having "come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel" (12:22-24).

Those who see a millennial passage here must ignore and deny plain passages of scripture that say Isaiah 2:2-4 has already been fulfilled. It is not millennial; it is Messianic. Those who claim that there will be an

earthly reign of Christ in Jerusalem for a thousand years have missed it a thousand miles!

God's mountain would be established above all other mountains; it would transcend all of the world's kingdoms in glory and grandeur. This mountain is the mountain of the new covenant unto which all nations would flow. Not only is it great in number, but it is broad in its reach. All nations will be included; none will be excluded. All will be taught how to walk in his ways for the law will go forth from Zion and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.[33] God himself will judge between the nations and decide concerning many peoples. Thus, God's word will be the standard by which all things are to be judged (John 12:48). The character of the citizens of the kingdom will be such that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah cannot have been speaking of the world here because they will continue their wars (see Matt. 24:6, speaking of the time preceding the destruction of Jerusalem).

Zechariah, who prophesied some two centuries after Isaiah, wrote: **9** "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass. **10** And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (9:9-10). Matthew 21:5 quotes this language and applies it to the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It

[33] In commenting on this passage Young makes the following cogent statement: "Two points must be stressed. First, God and God alone can teach the truth, for He only is the source and foundation of truth. Hence, those who proclaim the Word of God must exercise supreme care that what they preach is the Word of God. This can be accomplished only when the messenger bases his message squarely upon and makes it consonant with the written Word of God, the Bible. When the minister preaches, God must be heard. Secondly, this passage teaches that what unbelievers need above all else is teaching or doctrine. What blinds the understanding of men is ignorance, and ignorance can only be dispelled by truth. Hence, the missionary and evangelistic activity of the church must be doctrinal in character.

was in his kingdom that implements of war would be extinguished and peace would be proclaimed to the nations (Eph. 2:17). The Lord' kingdom would be neither extended nor defended by carnal warfare; its weapons are spiritual (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-17).

Vv. 5-11 – CORRUPTION: THE PEOPLE HAVE FORSAKEN JEHOVAH

From the ideal Jerusalem or Zion, Isaiah now turns to describe Jerusalem as it was in his day. He had invited them to go up to the mountain of Jehovah, learn of his ways and walk in his paths. He now invites them to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. Light reveals things. It can reveal a path, and danger, and even filth. It enables one to at least have the opportunity to walk in the right direction. The Psalmist said that God's word was a light to his path (119:105). It enabled him to see a situation for what it was and to take the right steps. Such conduct is the only way in which the ideal Jerusalem can be accomplished. But instead of continuing to address the people, Isaiah addresses God and states that God has forsaken his people. His statement is not a charge against God. Indeed, it is no more than a repetition of God's statement in 1:15 that his eyes are closed and that he will not hear their prayers. As God gave a reason for his rejection in 1:15 (their hands were full of blood), Isaiah proceeds to give reasons for his statement:

they are filled with customs from the east;

they are soothsayers like the Philistines;

they strike hands with the children of foreigners;

their land is full of silver and gold;

there is no end of their treasures;

their land is full of horses;

there is no end of their chariots;

their land is full of idols; and

they worship the work of their own hands.

There was certainly a breach between God and his people, but it was not of the making of God. It was the result of the conduct of his people. They had abandoned their God. They engaged in unholy conduct; they made unholy alliances; they trusted in their wealth and their army[34]; they wallowed in idolatry; and they believed that if they could not do it it could not be done. They lived for present prosperity believing it would create security; they had no eye on the future consequences of their conduct.

It is no wonder that judgment was coming. Judah had filled itself with the earth's knowledge and followed that by adopting its values. Judgment would come upon men of both high and low estate. They would be bowed down and brought low. Seeing no hope for change, Isaiah cries out that they would not be forgiven. They may seek safety in the rock (caves) and in the dust, but they will find no escape from the terror and glory of Jehovah's majesty. Man's lofty (prideful) look will be wiped from his face and his haughtiness brought low, but Jehovah will be exalted and his glory displayed.

Vv. 12-22 – A DAY OF JEHOVAH

Proverbs 16:18 is still true: "Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall." There will be judgment day (12). It will be a time of God's choosing (12). It will be wide sweeping (13-18). There will no escape (19). It will be too late to repent (20-21). Everything upon which they had relied will not only be thrown out, it will be thrown out to the most unclean of animals – the moles and the bats (20). There is only one way to avoid it – stop trusting in man! He is only a man and he has neither sufficient power nor wisdom to redeem and save you (22). His breath can cease at any moment.

Isaiah surely has a message for our day. This passage warns that God's judgment is a frontal assault on our pride. Where do we truly place our trust? It is so easy to place "In God We Trust" on our coins. It is

[34] Horses and chariots were the most powerful weapons of the day. God prohibited their multiplication in Deuteronomy 17:16. Thus Solomon's disobedience in 1 Kings 10:26-29 was a serious transgression.

even easier to place it on our lips. But in what do we really trust? Read the list of things in which Judah trusted and see if it does not ring bells both nationally and personally. The entire list of many allegations really boils down to one sin – pride. They trusted in themselves, their allies, and their combined ingenuity. We should hear Isaiah's warning: Man may be due respect because he is made in the image of God, but as objects of ultimate trust they are of no value at all!

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONFUSION

V. 1-12 – The Wages of Sin

Having called upon Judah to cease relying upon man's power and wisdom, Isaiah now proceeds to show the folly of such conduct. They are first reminded that judgment is coming. That judgment will remove Judah's staff and stay, bread and water. The most meager of diets will not be available (1). It will take away all of those upon whom society depends – the mighty man (heroes are gone), the man of war (defense is impossible), the judge (justice is unavailable), the prophet (neither true nor false word from God), the diviner (No more sorcery or "reading of tea leaves"), the elder (no wisdom of age; no city council members sitting at the gate), the captain of fifty (even if there were military there would be no leaders), the honorable man (no more who could be looked up to), the counselor (no wise guidance or good advice), and expert artificer (no one skilled in engraving wood or shaping metal to make their gods), and the skilful enchanter (another occupied with magic and divination) (2-3).

Who would replace the loss of the countries leaders? Children will be their princes and babes shall rule over them (4). This would result in a complete breakdown of society (v5).[35] The final evidence of society's breakdown would be the futile efforts of the people to put Humpty-

[35] This prophecy would ultimately come to pass more than 100 years after Isaiah's death. The Babylonians would be God's instrument. See the description in 2 Kings 25:1-12.

Dumpty together again. Anybody who had a coat would be asked to be a ruler. However, no one was willing to assume the task (6-7).

In vv 8-9 Isaiah once more identifies arrogance as Judah's downfall. They provoked the eyes of his glory in both word and deed. What greater arrogance can there be than to do that which is wrong right in the face (eyes) of the one whose command we are breaking? They openly declare their sin and make no attempt to hide it. But who is being harmed? They have done evil unto themselves. The result is "woe unto their soul."

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON FIVE

Vv. 10-11 remind us of Gal. 6:7-8: " Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." This principle is found all of the way through scripture. (See Obadiah 15.) But don't miss the ray of light in v. 10. There are righteous among them who shall eat of the fruit of their doing.[36]

v. 12 – The fact that weak and evil leaders led Judah astray is no excuse. They deserved the kind of leaders that they had. Isaiah describes them as immature little boys controlled by domineering women. But they were still responsible for their actions. It is true according to the old saying, "Every tub shall stand on its own bottom."[37] The leaders may have been the ones who destroyed the way of their paths, but it was the people who walked in the wrong way.

Vv. 13-15 – Judgment of the Rulers

[36] This is not to say that the righteous would not suffer in captivity along with the unrighteous. It is to say that the righteous will not come to the same ultimate end as the wicked.

[37] The oldest record of the saying found is, Let euery Fatte [vat] stande vpon his owne bottome. [1564 W. Bullein *Dialogue against Fever* 48^{V}]

Judgment is here. Jehovah stands to judge the peoples (the Nations).Isaiah declares that since God is the judge of the nations, he is also the judge of his own people. He starts with the rulers of his people. They are charged with having eaten up God's vineyard, or his people (see chapter 5). Their houses are filled with goods stolen from the poor, demonstrating their corruption. V. 15 is the ancient equivalent of "What in the world were you thinking? Did you really believe that you could get away with that?" There is no real answer that can be given to this question asked by "the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

Vv. 16-4:1 – Indictment of Vain and Worldly Women

Having censored the rulers, Isaiah turns his attention to Jerusalem's vain and worldly daughters of Zion. The punishment that they are to receive for their part in the corruption of Judah is severe. There will be scabs on their heads and their secret parts will be laid bare.[38] "In that day," *i.e.*, the day when their heads are scabbed, their jewels, perfumes, and clothes will all be taken away. Instead of a sweet odor there will be body odor (rottenness); instead of a weekly trip to the beauty parlor thee will be baldness; instead of a rope, a girdling of sackcloth. All of this will be topped off with a branding.[39]

Isaiah doesn't say specifically what these women had done, but from the punishments it is clear that they cared only for beauty. Their desire was for the finest of clothes, the odor of sweet perfume, the adornment of fine jewelry, and a fancy hair-do to top it all off. They cared only for themselves and had no thoughts, much less compassion, for the poor and helpless. The picture is one of conduct and character that are contrary to the holiness and righteousness of Jehovah. Neither Isaiah nor Peter (1 Pet. 3:1-5) condemns women for adorning themselves. What they both condemn is a proud and sensuous life patterned after the world with its lust and lascivious ways. These women

[38] Some commentators see the scabs as a disfiguring disease and the laying bare of secret parts as sexual abuse. To this they add captivity (a rope, v. 24) and bereavement (v. 25).

[39] Isaiah doesn't identify the brand. It may be the brand that was placed on captive slaves.

had a far-reaching influence on the nation's morals and were leading the nation astray.

The final blow comes in the loss of the nation's finest men in battle (25). Great mourning will follow (26). This will create a shortage of "eligible bachelors," and the women will face the double disgrace of being unmarried and childless. As a result, seven women will lay hold on and offer themselves to any surviving male, and, in return for his name, promise to feed and dress themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

JERUSALEM THE REDEEMED

V. 2 – The Branch of Jehovah

Isaiah now comes to the end of his description of Jerusalem as it then existed to Jerusalem the redeemed. In 2:2-4 we saw how God envisioned it. Jerusalem was to be "control central" of his rule. It is from his presence in Zion that his law will go forth and to which the Gentiles shall come. In 2:5 – 4:1 we saw Jerusalem decayed and corrupted as it existed in Isaiah's day. Instead of remaining what God has envisioned, Jerusalem (Zion), the people became corrupted with immorality and idolatry. They placed their confidence in the arm of flesh, not having learned that it would fail them. Walking as the nations round about leads to punishment for Judah just as it did for the Gentile nations. In 4:2-6 Isaiah reveals Jerusalem redeemed. God's promises will be fulfilled. Since the fall God has been working out his eternal promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10-22). Evil will be purged; the new Zion will be made glorious by the Branch and by Jehovah; a new order will be divinely created; Jehovah will effect a cleansing.

That which will come to pass will come to pass *in that day*. When *that day* will be is dictated by the context in which it appears. We saw in 2:2 that *the latter days* referred to the messianic age when the corruption and immorality had been removed by the judgment of captivity and the redemption of the

remnant. The same time is indicated here – the time when judgment shall have been executed and Jerusalem redeemed. It is at that time that the Branch of Jehovah will be glorious. It is here that Isaiah introduces the concept of the "Branch." This chart shows the use of "branch" in the Scripture.

Strong's Hebrew defines the term as "a sprout (usually concrete), literal or figurative:—branch, bud, that which (where) grew (upon), spring(-ing)." *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* says that the term is used 12 times in the Old Testament and that at least five of those occasions are Messianic in nature. It adds, "The first writer to take up the thought of 2 Sam 23:5 and use the root צמח as a noun to designate the Messiah is Isaiah (4:2). Many deny that Isaiah is referring to the Messiah when he speaks of "the Branch or Shoot of Yahweh" because it is paralleled by the expression "the fruit of the earth." Therefore, 4:2 is simply a reference to the agricultural prosperity of the land. But this view fails to notice that both of these expressions are elsewhere messianic. It also neglects to account for the unusual limitation of this fruitfulness "in that day"; the fruitfulness is "for the survivors of Israel." In this context it seems to have the concept not only of more than a "shoot" or "sprout," it is a growing thing in which dwells life and vitality. Specifically, it is the salvation through the Messiah that Jehovah has undertaken for the sake of humanity. The promise of God lived! It was not forgotten. When the *branch* appears *in that day* it will be beautiful and glorious. The *Branch* is developed further in Isa. 11:1 where we learn that it will come out of the stock of Jesse, David's father. In 11:10 the *Branch* is the ensign around which the nations will gather. More than 100 years later Jeremiah also spoke of the *Branch* (Jer. 23:5; 33:15), as did Zechariah, one of the last prophets (Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13).

There is disagreement among commentators as to exactly that to which the phrase "and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely" refers. Some commentators solve the problem by not speaking of it at all. Others make no positive suggestion but find fault with the suggestions of others. Young contends that it is a reference to the humanity of Jesus – the "Shoot" is from God and is his divine nature; the "fruit

of the land" refers to his humanity. He gives several reasons to support his position: 1) the Hebrew writer had this passage in mind when he wrote 7:14 – "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood"; 2) the parallelism between branch and fruit – the sprout is from the Lord and the fruit is from the land; he is the Sprout who comes forth from the Lord and the fruit who comes out of the land; 3) In many passages of Scripture there is a reference to the fruitfulness of the Messianic age; only here, however, is it stated that the fruit is for the dispersed of Israel; 4) The text provides no contrast between fruitfulness and barrenness; if all Isaiah is teaching is that in the Messianic age the land will be fruitful, to what does this stand in contrast?[40] 5) Only when fruit of the land" refers to the Messiah does it make sense with what follows. If it just refers literally to the fruit of the land, the thought is immediately dropped and not mentioned again. If on the other hand the term refers to the Messiah, then, according to Young, Isaiah has given a general statement for which he then fill in the details in the following verses.

Homer Hailey interprets the phrase as spiritual fruit. He argues that the mountain of Jehovah and Zion-Jerusalem are the spiritual kingdom under the Messiah, and the Branch is the Messiah who will come to Zion in the latter days. Why, then, he asks, should not the fruit of the land, the mountain to which the peoples will come, be of a spiritual nature? Jeremiah, he further argues, said that the Branch will "execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jer.23:5); hence the fruit of the land will be the spiritual fruit of those who submit to His rule of righteousness. He concludes that "this fruit will be *for them that are escaped of Israel*, that is, the remnant. His reasoning is appealing because it calls for a spiritual application; however, he does not identify the "spiritual fruit" nor does he state how the spiritual fruit is "for the remnant."

[40] This argument is based on the fact that just as the coming of the "Branch" and the redemption of Zion is contrasted with the corrupt Jerusalem that led to captivity, the "fruit of the land" should be contrasted to something. Where is the contrast if all that the passage means that in the Messianic age the land will be fruitful?

McGuiggan rejects Young as "fanciful." That is perhaps a bit strong. On the other hand it is not much strong than Oswalt's comment. Oswalt acknowledges that Young makes the most detailed defense of the application of "the fruit of the land" to the humanity of the Messiah, but his final evaluation of Young's position is that it "rests too much on scholarly ingenuity." Albert Barnes makes a strong response to Young's position.[41] He asserts:

1) The second phrase, according to the laws of Hebrew parallelism, is most naturally an echo or repetition of the sentiment in the first member, and means substantially the same thing;

2) The phrase "branch of Jehovah" does not refer of necessity to his Divine nature. The idea is that of a decayed tree that has fallen down, and has left a living root which sends up a shoot, or sucker; and can be applied with great elegance to the decayed family of David. But how, or in what sense, can this be applied to Jehovah? Is Jehovah thus fallen and decayed? The idea properly is that this shoot of a decayed family should be nurtured up by Jehovah; should be appointed by him, and should thus be *his* branch. The parallel member denotes substantially the same thing; the "fruit of the earth"—the shoot which the earth produces—or which springs up from a decayed family, as the sprout does not from a fallen tree

3) It is as true that his human nature proceeded from God as his Divine. It was produced by the Holy Ghost, and can no more be regarded as "the fruit of the earth" than his Divine nature; Luke 1:35; Heb. 10:5.

4) This mode of interpretation is fitted to bring the whole subject into contempt. There are plain and positive passages enough to prove that

[41] Barnes' (1798 – 1870) *Notes of the New Testament* were published sometime before 1872 when the last revision was published. This tells us that others held the position Young holds at a much earlier date. Barnes refers to some of them. Their identity is not relevant here. It is not certain when Barnes' work was originally published, but at least some of it was published before 1865. That year he was tried for heresy by the Presbyterian church because his commentary on Romans seemed to deny some of the tenets of Calvinism. It is said that prior to 1870 over one million of his commentaries had been sold.

the Messiah had a Divine nature, and there are enough also to prove that he was a man; but nothing is more adapted to produce disgust in relation to the whole subject, in the minds of skeptical or *thinking* men, than a resort to arguments such as this in defense of a great and glorious doctrine of revelation.

Barnes' argument is persuasive. What then does the passage mean? Barnes' conclusion above is reasonable. The fruit that springs up are those who come forth from the decayed family of David, which I understand to mean spiritual Israel.

McGuiggan does tell what he thinks it means as well as what he thinks it does not mean. He gets rid of the problem with the second half of the verse by rejecting the position that the Branch is Messianic in reference. He relates Isaiah's message to Hezekiah's statement (37:31) that "the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward." He then argues that both references in v. 2 are to the remnant and that Isaiah's concept of the remnant developed into the remnant in other passages.

> Where, then, does that leave us? It leaves us in a position where we cannot be dogmatic; however, that does not mean that we should not come to a conclusion. It seems that those who do not see the Messiah in 2a just aren't looking closely enough. Isaiah 11:1 is a good commentary on 4:2a. Isaiah speaks of a shoot out of the stock of Jesse will come forth and "a branch out of his roots will bear fruit." The Hebrew writer may have had this verse in mind in Heb. 7:14. Thus we know that this passage is Messianic. 11:1 has two entities – the shoot and a branch out of his roots that will bear fruit. 4:2 has two entities – the branch and the fruit of the land. Thus, the primary difference in the passage is the source of the fruit—in 4:2 it is the land; in 11:1 it is a branch that comes from the shoot. Is there really any difference? What is the land? Is it not redeemed Jerusalem-Zion. In the context are we not looking at spiritual fruit as in 2:2-3? Surely we are. Favoring this conclusion is the fact that it is consistent with the entire prophecy of Isaiah.

But we are not through with 4:2. Isaiah says that the fruit of the land *shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.* Homer

Haily says that this refers to the remnant. Young translates the phrase, "to the remnant of Israel." The English Standard renders the passage: "In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. Put together, the thought seems to be that the spiritual blessings that the Lord shall provide for the remnant will be the remnant's pride (excellence) and comeliness (honored by that with which they are robed).

Vv. 3-4 – The Escaped of Israel – The Remnant

This language seems to confirm that verse 2 speaks of the remnant that remains in Zion-Jerusalem. It is the remnant that exists according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5). This remnant shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem. Whereas position had been based on rank 3:2-3, 14), in the new Jerusalem it would be based on holiness of life. The fact that they will be called holy is based on the fact that they are holy before the Lord. God does not call things that are not as if they are. They are found *written* among the living in Jerusalem. They are in God's book. This status will occur when *the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion*. One great truth to be learned here is that God sees things far differently than man. The Lord calls the finery so prized by the daughters of Zion filth. They will be cleansed by the washing of the Lord's judgment. Concomitantly, the Lord will purge the blood of Jerusalem from its midst. The blood of Jerusalem undoubtedly came from murders (1:15) and from denying the essentials of life to the helpless (3:14-15). This purging will be accomplished by *the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning*. This is clearly a judgment from God. Scripture often uses fire in connection with cleansing and purification (Mal. 3:2-3; Matt. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15).

Vv. 5-6 – Protection and Guidance of the New Zion

The holy remnant in the New Jerusalem will enjoy the safety and security from Jehovah that they had sought in the arm of flesh. The language of verse 5 is reminiscent of God's guidance in the wilderness – a cloud of smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. It is a

condition that will be created by Jehovah. The word used for "created" is the same word used in Genesis of the original creation. It is a new creation like the original creation. This term for "creation" is used to describe that which God is to bring to pass for his people. In 65:17 Jehovah says that he will "create" new heavens and a new earth. He calls upon his people to be glad and rejoice forever in that which he will "create." He promises to "create" Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. An unidentified Psalmist[42] wrote: "a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah (102:18; see 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). God's glory will provide a covering over the new Jerusalem and over her assemblies wherever they may be.

Moreover, Jehovah will provide a pavilion for a shade from the heat, a refuge from the storm, and a cover from rain. The latter days have come and that which Jehovah promised has been performed. But if God is to dwell among us we must be cleansed from our guilt and sin. God cannot and will not dwell in a defiled temple. Once cleansed, God's holiness must somehow characterize our lives. As Amos asked, "How can two walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3)?"

Too much of that which passes for Christianity today is presented as a get rich quick scheme accompanied by perfect health. It is called the "health and wealth" gospel. Not only is it not true, it often causes those who do not enjoy "health and wealth" to conclude that God has abandoned them or that Satan is oppressing them. What has happened is that people have forsaken God and are, in essence, using him as both banker and physician who will make loans that don't have to be repaid and provide physical health without chrge. God does neither in response to actions motivated by greed. His will is that we lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19; 19:21), and as for our health, he refers us to the Great Physician to seek strength for the inward man even though the outward man is decaying (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16).

It is a tough lesson to learn, but the truth is that God is not too concerned about our being happy in this life. He is very greatly concerned

[42] The Psalm may have been written during the Babylon captivity. It has been conjectured that the author was Daniel, but there is no real basis for the conjecture.

that we be holy. A man can be happy on his way to hell. Comfort, security, and pleasure are all by-products, not ends within themselves. If we make "things" (including health) primary, we become idolaters and we lose those things even as we cherish and hoard them (Matt. 10:34-39; 16:25-26). If we place God first, he will bless us as he sees best and with such blessing we shall be satisfied because we know that we have him and that he is all we need. Other things may come and go and we can have joy in both knowing that he has no desire to deprive us, but that even in the fire he seeks to do us good.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Vineyard and Its Fruits

The exact time of this prophecy cannot be determined. Some place it in the latter days of Jotham and others in the early reign of Ahaz. The chapter discloses a people who were reaping that which they had sown. They had sown corruption, immorality, and rebellion; they were reaping the harvest of their evil deeds. Isaiah's preaching must have seemed as the ranting of a crazy man. After all, these were the chosen people of God. They had enjoyed the peace and prosperity of Uzziah's reign and its continuance in Jotham's reign. Surely this peace and prosperity was a display of the favor of Jehovah.

Vv. 1-7 – The Song of the Beloved and His Vineyard

Isaiah is a very versatile prophet. In these verses he becomes a singer. In his song he compares Judah to a vineyard. This is a common comparison in scripture (Psalm 80-8-12; cf Isa. 3:14). Some call it a love song. What Isaiah is doing is telling a parable in song. One commentator suggested that, because Isaiah knew that his message would not receive a ready hearing, he disguised himself as a minstrel and beguiled his hearers with song. Then the commentator quit preaching and went to meddling. He suggested that this demonstrated how creative and skilful the prophets were in communicating their message. He still would have been alright had he not added, "gospel preachers take note!" The opening of the song is surely demonstrative of the love that God had for his people. This, of course, assumes that the "beloved" of

whom he sings is Yahweh. That is, I think, a correct assumption. It was Isaiah's beloved who "had a vineyard (v. 1). The love is demonstrated by the care that God took in planning and creating his vineyard. He selected a fruitful hill, prepared the soil by digging it and removing stones, supplied it with the choicest vines, built a watchtower in its midst to shelter the watchman who was to protect it man or beast would destroy it, and prepared a winepress for its harvest (v. 2). But after all of the tender, loving preparation, the vineyard brought forth only wild grapes.

This brings the love song to a conclusion. It is followed by "tough love" lamentation. In v. 3 the speaker is now God, the owner of the vineyard. He calls upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah to judge between him and his vineyard. "And now," he says. The tone has changed. The time of judgment has come. They are called to judge, not in the sense that the decision is theirs, but to judge the truth of two facts that would prove their guilt and justify their punishment. The two questions (v. 4) containing the two facts are: 1) Was there anything that I could have done for my vineyard that I did not do; and 2) Did it bring forth wild grapes? They knew the answers. They were so obvious that no answer needed to be recorded. There was nothing else that God could have done. He had delivered them from Egypt. He had led them through the wilderness by cloud and by fire, providing water, food, and clothing. He had brought them to and given them the Promised Land. He had forgiven their oft rebellion. Surely God had the right to expect that they would now heed his commands and walk in his ways. But they did not and would not!

Thus God had no choice but to pronounce his judgment (vv. 5-7). He will take away the hedge, break down the wall, he will lay it waste, he will cease caring for the vines (neither prune nor hoe), he will cease watering it with his rain. The result is total ruin – cattle shall eat it and be trod it down, it will lay waste, it will brow up with briers and thorns.

In v. 7 Isaiah once more speaks and applies the parable to Israel. The time for poetry is passed. Israel is the vineyard and the men of Judah were God's pleasant plant. God looked for justice but found only

bloodshed.[43] God look for righteousness, but heard only a cry.[44] How sad. God set his affection upon and found his delight in his vineyard. He did not choose her because she was bigger and better, but because in her he could show his glory (Deut. 7; John 15:16). Because of her disobedience, God now pronounces six woes upon her.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON SIX

Vv. 8-23 – The Harvest: Wild Grapes! Six Woes!

Vv. 8-10 – Woe to greedy land-barons

God's people were characterized by avarice and greed. The rich took advantage of the poor by buying their houses and lands until, for all practical purposes, the rich owned them all. The poor lived under conditions that in our day and age might characterize a third world country with some living in their cardboard huts. Micah described their conduct well: "1 Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2 And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3 therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time (Micah 2:1-3)."

In vv. 9-10 God reveals the punishment that will be administered because of the conduct in v. 8. God speaks to Isaiah ("in mine ears") and through him tells the covetous hoarders of houses that they shall not enjoy their ill-gotten property because the houses will be desolate. Their houses may be great and high and comfortable but they shall be without inhabitant to enjoy them. Moreover, the land that they has

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[43] Literal translation by *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*

[44] The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* comments on this passage: "A strong cry frequently indicates that righteousness is absent or judgment is being executed. Even though Yahweh established Israel as a nation to produce justice and righteousness he discovered bloodshed and a cry, i.e., the city was oppressing the unfortunate."

taken will be barren and unproductive. Moses had promised that if the people were rebellious that the land would be cursed, would not bring forth increase or bear fruit (Lev. 26:20; Deut. 28:16-19). Notice in verse 10 that both examples use a 10 to 1 ratio. Ten acres of vineyard will produce 1 bath[45] (about 6 gallons) of wine. A homer (about six bushels) of seed will produce an ephah (one-tenth of a homer) of grain. Could it be that God is imposing a "reverse tithe" upon the greedy? In any event, both harvests were only a tiny part of what would normally be expected.

Vv. 11-17 – Woe to heavy drinkers

"Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Or so they say. Such is not the case, however, when, like the men of Judah, they were late to bed because they were "inflamed" with drink. They were early to rise so that they could start the process all over again. For them it was not a matter of once-in-a-while; it was a daily habit. According to the Hebrew scholar, Delitsch, that which they drank came not only from the grape, but from other sources, especially "wines made from fruit, honey, raisins, dates, etc, including barley wine or beer."

V. 12 reveals that they were not only drunkards, but that they were partygoers and revelers. Revelry and debauchery have always been the brother of winebibbers. God's people were too busy having a "good time" to attend to the things of God – "they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands." The difference is

that between daylight and dark, between Jehovah God and Lady Gaga. They were too busy running riot to attend to religion. They were fixing to learn the truth of Proverbs 23:31-32: "31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, When it sparkleth in the cup, When it goeth down smoothly: 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, And stingeth like an ad-

[45] There is disagreement over the size of a bath. Some say it is about 36.44 liters that would be a little over 9.6 gallons. Josephus puts it at about 10.56 gallons. The Rabbis considered it to be about 5.3 gallons.

der." They ignored the God of Glory. They gave the judgment of God no thought, or, if they did, they believed that God would not lift a hand against them. After all, they were his chosen people!

Edward Young suggests that the work of Jehovah that they ignored was, in its broadest sense, the work of "God in history to accomplish His purposes of redemption." He adds that the conduct in which they were engaged was that they were "too occupied with those very sins which were speeding it on to destruction." He concluded, "If men are too occupied with sin, their horizon is so restricted and narrowed that they cannot see sin's final consequences."

Vv. 13-14 speak again of God's judgment. The people go into captivity.[46] Their captivity will arise from lack of knowledge. They knew not the things of God. They knew not the consequences of their sin. They knew not the working of God. They did not know the signs of the time. See Hosea 4:6. They only knew how to have a "good time." Those who drank long of the wine and partied into the night will now be famished and thirsty. The second "therefore" in v. 14 indicates that the judgment is not yet finished. Sheol in this context is probably a reference to the tomb that awaits all. It is pictured as a famished beast opening wide its mouth to devour its prey. The partying people in large number, with their pomp and circumstance, revel their way into its jaws.

Vv. 15-16 recall the language of chapter 2 (9, 11, 17). Men both humble[47] and great are brought low. On the other hand Jehovah of hosts, the sovereign God above whom there is nothing or no one, will be exalted

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[46] This is one of the early instances in Isaiah of the "prophetic perfect" tense. When God has said either directly or through his prophet that something will happen, it is spoken of as if it had already occurred because it is so certain to happen. Put differently, that which God has said will come to pass will absolutely come to pass. The caveat is that we must determine whether the promise of God is conditional. For example, if God says that if A happens B will happen, B's failure to happen when A has not occurred is not a failure of God to keep his promise because the promise was conditional. Many of his promises, exhortations, and threats to the chosen people were of this nature.

[47] Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon defines the Hebrew word translated "mean" in the ASV as "*be bowed down, prostrated, humbled,* by *'y*; by man."

in his justice, and the God who is Holy[48] will be sanctified in righteousness.

The end result is that wanderers and animals shall roam the waste land that once flowed with milk and honey and where the vineyard of the Lord had been. The "fat ones"[49] whose luxuriant homes are now waste places are gone. There are only wanderers or sojourners who will not even make it a permanent home.

Vv. 18-19 – Woe to them who are enslaved to sin

This woe is pronounced upon those who are so enslaved to sin that they are pulling its load as if they were beasts of burden. The cords with which they draw their iniquities are falsehoods; they draw their sins with a cart rope. They are slaves to their sin-ridden way of life. Truly the way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15)! There is no more severe taskmaster than sin. Egypt never treated Israel any worse than they were treating themselves. Worse yet is the attitude that they display toward their God. They ridicule Isaiah who has warned them of impending judgment by saying in our vernacular "Let him bring it on. Let's see what he can do." They even mock the name by which Isaiah often calls his God – the Holy One of Israel. Surely the people of God had become atheists, at least of the practical sort[50]. They would not believe unless they saw God in action. How easy it is to be flippant when the skies are clear, but how our attitude changes when the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls and the earth begins to shake. Then we call for the mountains to fall upon us and seek a cave in which to hide (see 2:19). It is too late to sing, "Rock of Ages cleft for me. Let me hide myself in thee."

V. 20 – Woe to those who confuse moral distinctions

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[48] This does not mean that the acts of God are holy, though they are. It is asserting that holiness is one of His attributes. Since he is holy in His nature his acts cannot be otherwise.

[49] Semitic idiom for what we might call "fat cats" today.

[50] A practical atheist is one who says he believes there is a God but who lives as if there were not.

Of this passage, Keil and Delitzsch write: "The fourth woe: *'Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who give out darkness for light, and light for darkness; who give out bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.'* The previous woe had reference to those who made the facts of sacred history the butt of their naturalistic doubt and ridicule, especially so far as they were the subject of prophecy. This fourth woe relates to those who adopted a code of morals that completely overturned the first principles of ethics, and was utterly opposed to the law of God; for evil, darkness, and bitter, with their respective antitheses, represent moral principles that are essentially related (Matt. 6:23; Jas. 3:11). . . ." Truly irreverence and deep depravity are bedfellows. Those who ridicule God and dare him to do what he said he would do are also those who break down all moral distinctions redefine all ethical obligations. Does that remind you of any society with which you are familiar? Perhaps the one within which you live?

V. 21 – Woe to the self-deceived

The woes keep coming and the conduct continues to degenerate. This woe is pronounced upon those who believe that they are smarter than God – wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight. When the wisdom of God is rejected that leaves only one source – man. Will he never learn (Isa. 55:9; 1 Cor. 1:18-25)?

Vv. 22-23 – Woe to the perverters of justice

Isn't it a blessing for a nation to have mighty men and men of strength. That is certainly true when they lend their might and strength to the building up of that which is good and right. That is certainly untrue when, as here, they lend their might and strength to win drinking and drink-mixing contests. V. 23 indicates that these men were judges and rulers who, when they were not busy with drinking bouts, spent their time in taking bribes to deprive the righteous of righteousness and justice. Their greedy hearts were interested only in profit as a result of which justice was for sale to the highest bidder. The poor didn't have a chance. The powerful judges had the power to get away with it and so they did it. But did they have the power to get away with it?

Vv. 24-30 – A Terrifying Judgment

This conclusion to the list of woes tells us that they did not escape the consequences of their evil deeds. They had sown their seed; harvest time was here. Instead of a seventh woe we have another "therefore" introducing judgment. Isaiah uses two illustrations from nature to describe the judgment – fire (v. 24) and earthquake (v. 25) resulting loss of life so great that it lay as refuse in the street. All of this disaster is traced to one primary cause, "they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." Here Isaiah gets to the bottom line for all of the conduct described in the six woes. The Psalmist said, "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee" (119:11). When the law of God is rejected and his word despised there no hope for either person or nation.

Bryan Bear writes, "'Yet for all of this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is till upraised' occurs again in 9:12, 17, 21 and 10:4 to denote God's persistent anger even amid terrible judgments. Isaiah's words emphasize how seriously God takes sin, whether he finds it among unbelievers or among his people."[51]

But a more terrible judgment is on the way (v. 26-30). God is raising a flag and calling nations from afar, from the end of the earth, and they shall respond and come quickly. They will not get tired or slumber and sleep. They will not loosen their war dress or take off their shoes. Their arrows are sharp and their bows are ready. Their horses will not become lame or their chariots get flats. They shall roar like a lion as they lay hold on their prey and carry it away where none can deliver them. They shall roar as the sea and if anyone looks at their land they will see only darkness and distress with clouds darkening the light. Hurricane Ike has hit the land.

Isaiah does not identify the source from which these marauders come at this point, but he subsequently names Assyria (7:17; 8:7; 10:5; etc.).

Need we worry? Absolutely! That which Isaiah is describing here is characteristic of our nation and of far too much of the church. Now as

[51] *Encountering The Book of Isaiah*, p. 58.

then it is the result of an erroneous worldview. Our society has become ego centered – there is no meaning to life except that which we give it and there is no absolute truth, only a truth for ourselves that we believe which may and probably does differ from the next person's truth. The consequences of this no meaning/no truth philosophy are staggering. We recognize that a society that permits lying and stealing and killing cannot survive, but when it comes to ourselves we cut some slack. A little lie here and a little theft there and a murder of a reputation there is not so bad. Besides such conduct is necessary to get ahead in this dog-eat-dog world. What a change! Until this change began America was a place that lived based on honesty. We were guided by a Biblical ethic and moral which made us a law-abiding nation admired by other nations. Now we have become a nation for which there is no God other than ourselves. We obey the laws of the land selectively and ignore the laws of God. After all, we are certain that obedience to God's laws does us no good, keeps us from having fun, and makes us different from everybody else. The truth is that the little moral and ethical conduct that remains in this country exists because those who came before us made right choices and left an inheritance for us. We are now destroying that last little bit. We believe that we can obtain all the benefits of life by living only for ourselves and our own pleasure.

Can it be that this worldview is actually invading the church? Look at the results of studies of those who claim to be Christians in the broadest sense of that term in today's world. Christian teenagers are as apt to cheat in school as any other teenagers. More than half think there are no absolute moral standards. Divorces among those called "evangelicals" now exceed the national norm. Can we really claim that we are following the One who created us in his image? We are certainly living as if we do not believe that God has created this world with certain spiritual principles that are as immutable as the natural principles that he placed in nature to control it.

How did we get here? V. 24 tells us – we have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. There is a right and a wrong and they exist because the God of Glory established them, *i.e.*, because God said so. He is holy and commands us to be holy.

He expects us to be holy because we are made in his image. There is no other reason that can explain what has gone wrong. While commercials like "Go for the Gusto; you only go around once" contribute to it, they would have no impact but for our having forsaken the word of God and its authority.

Unless there is a God in heaven whose word and authority determines that which is right and that which is wrong, there is nothing to keep right from becoming wrong, wrong from becoming right, truth from becoming falsehood, and falsehood from becoming truth. As a church, and now specifically now as a congregation of the Lord's people we must be certain that we bow before the God of Heaven and his authoritative word. If we fail in this respect, the salt will have lost its savor and God will be excluded from our lives, except perhaps in name only and that mostly in vain.

We must realize that such fallen lives will have consequences. We understand that when we violate the physical laws of God fatal consequences can follow. Jump off of the Empire State building and see if that is not true. We may say that we have broken the law of gravity, but that is not true. We have proved it. We have demonstrated it. But we have not broken it. It has broken us. When that has happened, people don't get angry at the law of gravity and blame it for what happened. They speak of the foolishness of the one who leaped.

The same thing is true of God's spiritual laws. We may reject them and refuse to follow them, but we cannot do so without eternal consequences. We refuse to admit that we have disobeyed God's laws. Even if we should admit such transgressions, because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily our hearts are fully set in us to continue such conduct (Ecclesiastes 8:11). When those consequences come, we have not broken the immutable law of God. We have proved it. We have demonstrated it. But we have not broken it. It has broken us. It will do us no good to get angry at God and blame him for what has happened. We can only blame ourselves and our foolishness for our eternal loss.

LESSON SEVEN

CHAPTER SIX

The Vision and Call of Isaiah

Vv. 1-5 – Isaiah's Vision of the Lord

This is a brief but significant chapter. Webb makes the same point more eloquently saying that chapter 6 "towers like a majestic peak over the surrounding terrain and is clearly of central importance for the message of the book."[52] It records the call that Isaiah had to be God's prophet and messenger. Much has been written about why it appears here rather than at the book's beginning. As usual, when no reasons are given and no facts are stated, speculation disguised as scholarship abounds. Since Isaiah did not tell us and now cannot tell us, we shall remain silent on the matter and proceed to discuss that which the chapter says. The dates for Uzziah's death range widely from 748-734 B.C. Most place it around 739-740. As we have learned, Uzziah's reign was one of peace and prosperity. He was, for the most part, a good king, having "veered off" at the end that caused him to be afflicted with leprosy. It was in the year of Uzziah's death that Isaiah was startled by a vision from God.[53] While Isaiah does not tell us where he was when the vision came, most picture him in the temple at worship. That is certainly where a man of Isaiah's character would spend a great deal of time. Some suggest that it had to be the temple because

[52] Webb, Barry G., *The Message of Isaiah*, p. 58.

[53] Isaiah's language here is very clear and precise. Accordingly, it was more than historical interest that led Isaiah to be very precise about the date that he was writing. But why would he be so interested in unequivocally revealing the year of his vision. Is it any more than baggage in a very significant moment in his life? Since Isaiah does not say we can do no more than postulate. Could it be that with the death of Uzziah that an important period in the history of Judah had ended and another had begun? Jotham was not a strong king and we know that Ahaz had a strong attraction for Assyria. Had his covenant with Assyria already begun? If so, Judah was doomed. Could this account for the instruction that God gave Isaiah about the message that he was to preach?

Isaiah writes that God's throne filled the temple in v. 1. However the Hebrew word translated temple can also mean "palace." *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, #964. God is seen as sitting upon a throne which you find in a palace.

Which is it – temple or palace?[54] If Isaiah's location had been important God would have told us. He didn't. My OPINION is that it makes no difference, but I "lean" toward the Temple. Some equate the smoke mentioned with the Shekinah,[55] which is associated with the Temple. Wherever he was, he was transported by vision into the very presence of God, beholding him in his glory. John was familiar with the passage, having written, "These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him [Jesus]" (12:41). By the time of Uzziah's death, Judah had fallen from the early peace and prosperity of his reign. Its glory had departed (see 1 Sam. 4:21-22).

Immediately after telling us the time of the vision Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord." Based on this language Hailey takes the position that the one on the throne must have been Jesus since "no man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18). However, Isaiah saw God in a vision, not directly. After checking 15-20 commentaries and all of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, I found some others who took that position. Most seemed to discuss "seeing the Lord" and pass on. Chrysostom, one of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, had a lengthy discourse in *Homilies on the Gospel According to St. John*, Homily 15:

> "No man hath seen God at any time." By what connection of thought does the Apostle come to say this? After showing the exceeding greatness of the gifts of Christ, and the infinite difference between them and those ministered by Moses, he would add the reasonable cause of the difference. Moses, as being a servant, was minister of lower things, but Christ being Lord and King, and the King's Son, brought to us things far greater, being ever with the Fa-

[54] Of course, it could have been a "house" as well if all of the possibilities mentioned are to be considered. (v. 4).

[55] A Hebrew word from the root 'to dwell' that is translated as the 'Presence' of God.[55] *Harper's Bible Dictionary.*

ther, and beholding Him continually; wherefore He saith, "No man hath seen God at any time." What then shall we answer to the most mighty of voice, Esaias, when he says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up" (Isa. vi. 1); and to John himself testifying of Him, that "he said these things when he had seen His glory"? (c. xii. 41.) What also to Ezekiel? for he too beheld Him sitting above the Cherubim. (Ezek. i. and x.) What to Daniel? for he too saith, "The Ancient of days did sit" (Dan. vii. 9.) What to Moses himself, saying, "Show me Thy Glory, that I may see Thee so as to know Thee." (Ex. xxxiii. 13, Ex. xxxiii 13 partly from LXX.) And Jacob took his name from this very thing, being called "Israel"; for Israel is "one that sees God." And others have seen him. How then saith John, "No man hath seen God at any time"? It is to declare, that all these were instances of (His) condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled. For had they seen the very Nature, they would not have beheld It under different forms, since that is simple, without form, or parts, or bounding lines. It sits not, nor stands, nor walks: these things belong all to bodies. But how He Is, He only knoweth. And this He hath declared by a certain prophet, saying, "I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the hands of the prophets" (Hos. xii. 10), that is, "I have condescended, I have not appeared as I really was." For since His Son was about to appear in very flesh, He prepared them from old time to behold the substance of God, as far as it was possible for them to see It; but what God really is, not only have not the prophets seen, but not even angels nor archangels. If you ask them, you shall not hear them answering anything concerning His Essence, but sending up, "Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." (Luke ii. 14.) If you desire to learn something from Cherubim or Seraphim, you shall hear the mystic song of His Holiness, and that "heaven and earth are full of His glory." (Isa. vi. 3.) If you enquire of the higher powers, you shall but find that

> their one work is the praise of God. "Praise ye Him," saith David, "all His hosts." (Ps. cxlviii. 2.) But the Son only Beholds Him, and the Holy Ghost. How can any created nature even see the Uncreated? If we are absolutely unable clearly to discern any incorporeal power whatsoever, even though created, as has been often proved in the case of angels, much less can we discern the Essence which is incorporeal and uncreated. Wherefore Paul saith, "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (1 Tim. vi. 16.) Does then this special attribute belong to the Father only, not to the Son? Away with the thought. It belongs also to the Son; and to show that it does so, hear Paul declaring this point, and saying, that He "is the Image of the invisible God." (Col. i. 15.) Now if He be the Image of the Invisible, He must be invisible Himself, for otherwise He would not be an "image." And wonder not that Paul saith in another place, "God was manifested in the Flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16); because the manifestation took place by means of the flesh, not according to (His) Essence. Besides, Paul shows that He is invisible, not only to men, but also to the powers above, for after saying, "was manifested in the Flesh," he adds, "was seen of angels."
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> [2.] So that even to angels He then became visible, when He put on the Flesh; but before that time they did not so behold Him, because even to them His Essence was invisible.[56]

The bottom line here is that Isaiah "saw the Lord." The Hebrew word used is *Adonai*. In vv. 3 and 5 the word *Yahweh* is used. It may be that the majority of commentators speak of seeing God, apparently meaning the Father, without considering who is meant. On the other hand, it could be that they did not comment on it because they either thought that all readers would understand that it was Christ or that it made no difference whether it was a particular member of the Godhead or the entire Trinity. The best commentary on scripture is the scripture it-

[56] There is much more to this Homily if you care to read it in its entirety.

self. John 12:41[57] at least alludes to this passage and applies the passage to Jesus. That is highly persuasive. However, the fact is that even if Isaiah was seeing the preincarnate Christ[58] he was still seeing God and all that that term implies because "in him dwell[ed] the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Thus, to see him is to see the Father (John 14:9). Thus, if Isaiah "saw" God in the sense of John 1:18 then he did that which 1 Tim. 6:16 says man cannot do. We can conclude that "seeing" God in a vision does not fall within the parameters of John 1:18 or 1 Tim. 6:16.

Isaiah saw God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. The throne signifies 1) the majesty of Deity who created the world and all that in it is, and 2) the fact that he is King and that, as King he is powerful enough to rule in the affairs of men and to render judgment upon them and that he is now ready to do so. His majesty is not only shown by the high throne upon which he sits, but also by his train that filled the temple or palace and the seraphim[59] stood above him. The term is plural so there were two or more. One cried unto another, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."[60] There

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[57] These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

[58] In his commentary on Isaiah, Edward J. Young, almost in passing, "quotes John Calvin as saying that Isaiah saw "the Christ (John 12:41), and justly, for God never revealed himself to the Fathers but in his eternal Word and only begotten Son." I have never checked the validity of that statement but I have no reason to doubt it.

[59] **Seraphim**. The only mention of these celestial beings in Scripture is in the early vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6). The seraphim (, plural, incorrectly rendered in the AV as 'seraphims') were associated with cherubim and ophanim in the task of guarding the divine throne. The heavenly beings seen by Isaiah were human in form, but had six wings, a pair to shield their faces, another to conceal their feet and a third for flight. These seraphim were stationed above the throne of God, and appear to have led in divine worship. One chanted a refrain which Isaiah recorded: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

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If the noun be derived from Heb. *śārap̱* 'to burn up', the seraphim may be agents of purification by fire, as Is. 6. indicates.

[60] This may imply that there was only one crying the praise, but it seems odd that one would be silent if they are worshipping creatures. It could be that there were more and that they were all singing to one another. Most commentators seem to agree that the singing was antiphonal. The numbers suggested tend to larger ra-

was a simultaneous shaking of the thresholds where he stood[61] along with a filling of the "house" with smoke. While it may have been that the smoke just helped create the majesty of the scene, its similarity to Rev. 15:8 is striking: "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished." Thus, as with the seven bowls of wrath, the smoke may symbolize the wrath that God was fixing to pour out on a rebellious people.

Vv. 6-7 – The Consecration of the Prophet

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ther than smaller, although some of the Early Church Fathers said that there were only two.

Albert Barnes has a cogent comment: "Heb. 'This cried to this.' That is, they cried to each other in alternate responses. One cried 'Holy;' the second repeated it; then the third; and then they probably united in the grand chorus, 'Full is all the earth of his glory.' This was an ancient mode of singing or recitative among the Hebrews, see Ex. Xv. 20, 21, where Miriam is represented as going before in the dance with a timbrel, and the other females as following her, and *answering*, or responding to her."

Keil & Delitzsch in their *Commentary on the Old Testament* say of the seraphim: This is the only passage in the Scriptures in which the seraphim are mentioned. According to the orthodox view, which originated with Dionysius the Areopagite, they stand at the head of the nine choirs of angels, the first rank consisting of *seraphim, cherubim,* and *throni.* And this is not without support, if we compare the cherubim mentioned in Ezekiel, which carried the chariot of the divine throne; whereas here the seraphim are said to surround the seat on which the Lord was enthroned. In any case, the seraphim and cherubim were heavenly beings of different kinds; and there is no weight in the attempts made by Hendewerk and Stickel to prove that they are one and the same. And certainly the name *serpahim* does not signify merely spirits as such, but even, if not the highest of all, yet a distinct order from the rest; for the Scriptures really teach that there are gradations in rank in the hierarchy of heaven. Nor were they mere symbols or fanciful images, as Hävernick imagines, but real spiritual beings, who visibly appeared to the prophet, and that in a form corresponding to their own supersensuous being, and to the design of the whole transaction. Whilst these seraphim hovered above on both sides of Him that sat upon the throne, and therefore formed two opposite choirs, each ranged in a semicircle, they presented antiphonal worship to Him that sat upon the throne.

[61] Some speculate that the shaking was caused by the cries but that is not a necessary conclusion.

Isaiah is overwhelmed by his seeing the Lord, the King, Jehovah of hosts and by how he sees himself in the presence of the Lord. He confesses himself to be a sinner and declares that he is a man of unclean lips and that he lives in the midst of a people of unclean lips. His cry of "Woe is me" and his declaration that he is undone reveals his fear of absolute failure and ruin. His declaration of unclean lips confesses a heart problem. Lips speaks of words and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). How could the Holy One of Israel deal with a man who had just confessed unholiness? The truth is that he could not unless the problem was cured. Thus God, through his seraphim, went into action. One of the seraphim flew down to Isaiah with a live coal taken from the alter[62] and with it touched Isaiah's lips. Having done so, he declared that Isaiah's iniquity was taken away and his sin forgiven.

Vv. 8-13 – The Prophet's Commission from Jehovah

Isaiah has been forgiven, but God had more in mind. He did not appear to Isaiah just for forgiving him; that could have been accomplished through the sacrificial system. God wanted a prophet and he had chosen Isaiah. The seraphim's song was over. The voice of God, speaking for the first time in the vision, broke the silence: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" God could have but he did not give a command. He wanted a prophet who wanted to serve. He wanted a prophet who was not coerced, but committed. Isaiah was ready to be just that prophet; "Here am I; send me."

In verses 9 and 10 Isaiah receives his charge. He is to go to "this people." God no longer calls them "my people." The message that Isaiah is to preach is that "this people" hear but do not understand; they see but they do not perceive. Isaiah is to make the people fat, their ears heavy, and their eyes shut lest they hear, understand, see, and turn again and be healed.

[62] The presence of an altar is argued as evidence that this event occurred in the temple. It is persuasive but not conclusive. After all, this is part of the vision and Isaiah was transported in the vision to the presence of God upon his throne. There was no throne in the temple.

Why would God commission Isaiah to preach a message that would harden and not convert? One need only go back to the opening chapters to learn the reason. The time for repentance was over; judgment had come. The people did not understand. They had a head and heart problem. There was no cure to be found in continuing in their way of life. Isaiah's message was one of judgment. Is this not still the way of God – "8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

Another possibility is that if Isaiah had preached a "pleasant message" with no condemnation of the unholy life that characterized Judah, the people would have paid no more attention to him than they did to the false prophets who preached exactly the same message. Worse yet, most likely we would never have heard of this Isaiah. Isaiah's message at least called them to repentance and let them know that repentance was needed. After that call the next step was up to the hearers. Isaiah could not and God would not make them repent involuntarily.

But if they had such hard hearts that they would not repent, why preach to them at all? Never forget throughout our study that God had left himself a remnant[63] (1:9; Rom. 9:27). God never loses sight of those who hear his voice and do his will. If you do not believe that just read the closing verses of this chapter. Isaiah has one question – how long am I to proclaim this message? The answer is to continue not until Isaiah drops, but until Judah drops – until cities be waste without inhabitant, houses without man, the land becomes utterly waste, Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in

[63] In the American Standard Version only Jeremiah (18) exceeds Isaiah (17) in the use of the word *remnant*.

the midst of the land. Two words describe Judah's coming condition – desolation and deportation. BUT DON'T OVERLOOK THE LAST VERSE!!! It begins with more destruction. If there is a tenth left it shall also in turn be eaten up. It may be reduced to a tenth of a tenth. But just like a terebinth or an oak that is felled leaves a stump, SO THE HOLY SEED IS THE STOCK THEREOF. "As Alexander[64] said, "However frequently the people may seem to be destroyed, there shall still be a surviving remnant, and however frequently that very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left, and this indestructible residuum shall be the holy seed, the true church . . ." (Rom. 11:5).

What can we learn from all of this? Could it be that we, like the people of Judah, believe that the solution to all of our problems is in ourselves? As long as I can solve all of my problems, I am the King and God is the servant. Perhaps that is the reason that we have reduced God to nothing more than a "friend" and not a very close one at that. He is welcome into our lives as long as we have nothing else to do and nowhere else to go. Let one such opportunity arise and God is dropped down several steps on the ladder. Surely he will be happy with the crumbs that fall from our tables.

God's grace has become something that he owes us. He has no right to demand or command that we do anything to receive his grace. Just recently a church somewhere had the audacity to picket a house of ill repute that set up shop close to its building. In response some of the "ladies of the night" put on their skimpiest bikinis and picketed the church on a Sunday morn. One of them was interviewed. Her comment (paraphrased) was along the line that she was a Christian and believed in Jesus though she did not believe what the church was teaching. She added that none of that had anything to do with whether or not she was going to heaven. Ridiculous you say? Unbiblical and unscriptural you say? The question we need to ask is not what is wrong with that woman, but are we doing the same thing in a different way?

[64] Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, quoted by Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*.

Are we living in a manner that says the way we live has nothing to do with whether we go to heaven? Are we speaking in a manner that says our words have nothing to do with justification or condemnation (Matt. 12:37)?

We have declared ourselves as pretty good people and God just has to know that we mess up at least once in a while and at most pretty often. What we need is what one writer called "the blazing holiness of God." We are not dealing with a "friend" or "buddy." We are dealing with the God who is greater than the whole universe, the creator of that universe, and the controller of it all. We need to come into his holy presence where sin cannot even exist. We need to understand that he owes us nothing and has no obligation to do anything for us. How then, do we even think that there is the slightest hint of a suggestion of a possibility that God will accept much of our worship today when most of it is about us and whether we will "feel good" during and after it. Most of it seems to be mechanical instead of thoughtful. The old motto "Swing and sway with Sammy Kaye" has been replaced with "Swing and sway with Jehovah." Instead of lifting up an anthem of praise to God we want to give him a round of applause and what we want is more important than what he wants. Can we say that our worship is thoughtful when we sing a song that says of the Roman soldiers, "They sacrificed the Son of God." If ever a falsehood was sung that is it. What scripture says of the Romans was in Peter's Pentecost sermon: "him [Jesus], being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye [the Jews] by the hand of lawless men [Roman officials and soldiers] did crucify and slay." Does that sound like God considered it a Roman sacrifice? If we thought about it would we not know that God himself offered the sacrifice of his Son by delivering up his lamb (Rom. 8:32; John 1:29). No man took Jesus life; he laid it down himself (John 10:15-18; 1 John 3:16). It was then God the Son who by that blood entered into the heavenly Holy Place having obtained redemption for us. While you may dismiss this as hypercriticism from your teacher and just pass it by, you would do better to ask, "What does God think when we give Roman soldiers credit for what he did for us through and by the Son?" But did not God make the sacrifice by using the Romans just as he used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish

his people? God certainly used the Romans, but not to punish Jesus who knew no sin and deserved no punishment. The Jews sacrificial lambs were sacrificially slain in connection with the sins of Judah, but they were not punished. Neither were the people or priests punished for slaughtering the lamb. Additionally, if that analogy is used then remember that God then punished the Assyrians and Babylonians because of their iniquity. If the Roman officials and soldiers were offering a sacrifice would they not then be free from punishment?

What I am seeking to do is to impress upon us that worship is not a thoughtless mechanical act. It is not to please us it is to please God. It is not to make us feel good unless offering up praise and thanksgiving to God makes us feel good. We don't play with children; we don't text message on our phones; we don't saunter the aisles. We concentrate on one thing; we think about one thing; we do our best to see that our worship is without spot or blemish, the very best that we can make it both individually and congregationally. We have no right and no basis to think that God will be pleased with anything less.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON EIGHT

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Syro-Ephraimitic[65] Uprising

Vv. 1-2 – The Syria-Israel Confederacy

As we learned in the introduction, Judah's fortunes started changing dramatically some five years before Uzziah's death. Tiglath Pileser III ascended to (seized) the throne in Assyria and immediately started fulfilling his ambitions for world domination. The kings of Syria and Israel began to feel the heat, put aside their past animosity, and united against a common enemy. They sought to involve Jotham, and later

[65] In these passage Israel is called Ephraim. This most likely comes from the fact that Jereboam, Israel's first king, was an Ephraimite.

Ahaz (2 Kings 15:37), but the result of that effort is unknown. Another more forceful effort to create an alliance with Ahaz (Judah) was made by Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) (2 Kings 16:11; 2 Chron. 28). Israel slew many of the mighty of Judah and took many prisoners. Apparently the effort would have succeeded but for the intervention of Jehovah (Read all of 2 Chron. 28). The date of these events is difficult to know. All we know for certain is that "it came to pass is the days of Ahaz."[66]

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[66] Edward J. Young gives the following explanation of these events: "Apparently the book of Kings gives an account of the beginning and conclusion of the campaign, whereas Chronicles presents the intervening events. It may be noted that 2 Kings 16:5 and Isaiah 7:1 are very similar. Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel came up against Jerusalem for war, they assert, but failed to take it.

According to 2 Chron. 28:5 the Lord gave Ahaz into the hands of the king of Syria. There has been question as to whether this event belongs to the same campaign or to a different phase of the same campaign. It is also possible that, even though King Ahaz was temporarily taken, the enemy could not conquer the city itself. If this were the case it would have been parallel to Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in which the King Jehoiakim was captured but not the city itself. To determine the precise relationship between the accounts in Kings and Chronicles is probably not possible with our meager knowledge of the war. It is clear that both speak of the same war, but whether they distinguish different phases of that war we cannot be sure.

At any rate Ahaz was smitten and a great number of captives were taken from his army and they were brought to Damascus. The text does not state that Ahaz himself was taken to Damascus, and it may refer only to the prisoners of war. Apparently Ahaz was given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great blow. The spoil which had been taken from Judah was brought to Samaria.

At Samaria, however, there was a prophet name Oded, who went before the returning army, advising the return of the captives, and in this advice he was joined by certain chiefs of the Ephraimites. Consequently the prisoners were taken to Jericho, a city of Judah, and there were dismissed.

About this time Ahaz appealed to the king of Assyria for help. In the language of 2 Kings 16:7, "Then Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria saying Thy servant and thy son am I, come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel who have risen up against me."

It is at this point that we must consider the relationship of Isaiah 7 to the passages in Kings and Chronicles. With slight variations 2 Kings 16:5 and Isaiah 7:1

V. 1 records the first attempt by Syria and Israel to force Judah into their alliance against Assyria. The house of David was told what was happening, and the heart of the King and the heart of his people trembled with fear (v. 2). Why is reference made here to the house of David rather than to Ahaz? It is clear that the initial foray by Syria and Israel were at the behest of Jehovah (2 Kings 15:37). Yet they failed. One thing that most certainly was not done at the behest of Jehovah was the removal of Ahaz and the anointing of a new king who was not from the house of David. Recall that God used nations to punish his people, but them punished those nations for their iniquity (Isa 10; Jer. 25:12). He would use them to fulfill his purpose; he would keep them from defeating his purpose. His purpose and promise was to preserve a remnant who would be his people and to save his people by bringing forth the Messiah who would reign upon the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Luke 1:32-33). If the invaders were permitted to destroy the house of David by eliminating the lineage of David, God's purpose would be destroyed. The next section reveals that God plans to stop the invasion.

Vv. 3-9 – Confrontation Between Belief and Unbelief

God begins by speaking to Isaiah. Isaiah is instructed to take his son, Shear-jashub, and go to the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field.[67] There they were to meet Ahaz.[68] Isaiah was to

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are practically identical. Isaiah 7:1 gives a summary of the entire situation. Ahaz had already been captured and released, and the huge spoil mentioned in 2 Chronicles 28:5ff had been taken. The meeting with Isaiah described in Isaiah 7:2ff. occurred, it would seem, after these events and before Ahaz made his appeal to Tiglath-pileser for help. Apparently what induced him to turn to Assyria was the report that Syria was resting upon Ephraim. The hostile intentions of the two enemy kings had not yet been abandoned, despite the fact that they had once released Ahaz."

[67] In all references occurs "the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field"; this must have been a well-known landmark at Jerusalem in the time of the monarchy. Here stood Rabshakeh in his interview with Eliakim and others on the wall (2 Ki 18:17; Isa 36:2); clearly the highway was within easy earshot of the walls. Here Isaiah and Shear-jashub, his son, met Ahaz by command of Jehovah (Isa 7:3). An old view placed these events somewhere near the present Jaffa Gate, as here runs an aqueduct from the *Birket Mamilla* outside the walls of the *Birket*

begin his message, "Take heed and be quiet." A prophet with God behind him dares to command the king. He then is to tell him not to be afraid of Rezin and the son of Ramaliah because the evil that they had purposed against Ahaz would not stand or come to pass. After all, they were only two tails of smoking firebrands.[69] They don't have the pow-

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Hamam el Batrah, inside the walls; the former was considered the "Upper Pool" and is traditionally called the "Upper Pool" of Gihon. But these pools and this aqueduct are certainly of later date (see JERUSALEM). Another view puts this highway to the N. side of the city, where there are extensive remains of a "conduit" running in from the N. In favor of this is the fact that the N. was the usual side for attack and the probable position for Rabshakeh to gather his army; it also suits the conditions of Isa 7:3. Further, Josephus *(BJ,* V, iv, 2) in his description of the walls places a "Monument of the Fuller" at the N.E. corner, and the name "fuller" survived in connection with the N. wall to the 7th century, as the pilgrim Arculf mentions a gate. W. of the Damascus gate called *Porta Villae Fullonis.* The most probable view, however, is that this conduit was one connected with Gihon, the present "Virgin's Fountain" (see GIHON). This was well known as "the upper spring" (2 Ch 32:30), and the pool, which, we know, was at the source, would probably be called the "Upper Pool." In this neighborhood — or lower down the valley near *En-rogel,* which is supposed by some to mean "the spring of the fuller" — is the natural place to expect "fulling." Somewhere along the Kidron valley between the Virgin's Fountain and the junction with the Tyropeon was the probable scene of the interview with Rabshakeh; the conversation may quite probably have occurred across the valley, the Assyrian general standing on some part of the cliffs now covered by the village of Siloam. *The International Standard Encyclopedia.*

It was customary for a fuller to work outside a town within reach of water in which clothes could be cleaned by treading them on a submerged stone. Hence the fuller was characteristically called a 'trampler' (Heb. *kaœb≈as*). At Jerusalem the locality outside the E wall where garments were spread to dry in the sun was called the '**fuller's field**' (2 Ki. 18:17; Is. 7:3; 36:2). Christ's garments at the transfiguration were described as brighter than it was possible for any fuller (Gk. *gnapheus*, 'cloth dresser') to whiten them (Mk. 9:3). *IVP-NB Dictionary.*

[68] This is a good example of the wisdom of reading scripture carefully. If they were to meet Ahaz there, then Ahaz (providence aside) had already decided on his own to go there. Why would he be going to a place where water was to be found? Could it be that he had already decided to resist the siege of Rezin and Pekah and was surveying the water that would be available during the siege?

[69] Amos 4:11 defines "firebrand": "I have overthrown *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD." It is a piece of wood plucked from

er to accomplish what they are trying to do. Rezin is king of Syria and that is all he will ever reign over. Pekah, the son of Remaliah,[70] is king over Ephraim and that is all he will ever reign over. If Ahaz did not believe this message he would not be established. The implication is that he would be established if he believed. Isaiah offers Ahaz a radical alternative – reject all alliances and thoughts of alliances and trust fully in Jehovah. It was not an offer that could not be refused and Ahaz refused it. The presence of Shear-jashub, whose name means "a remnant shall return," should have caused Ahaz to listen to the message because the name revealed the purpose of God to preserve a remnant of his people. Judah would not fall to the Syria-Israel conspiracy[71]; the son of Tabeel[72] would not become king. It is Ephraim that shall fall within 65 years so that it shall not be a people.[73] Isaiah closes his message to

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the fire – still smoking but its life is gone. All that was left was what Delitzsch described as "fag ends . . . which would not blaze any more but continue smoking. They would burn and light no more, though their smoke might make the eyes smart still."

[70] Pekah is treated with disdain and not even called by name. He had no right to the throne, having ascended by usurpation (2 Kings 15:25). Pekah appeared to be the leader in Gilead during Menahem's reign but surrendered control there when Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria confirmed Menahem's rule. Pekah then was given a high office in the army, and the coup followed shortly after Pekahiah succeeded Menahem. Pekah reigned in Samaria 752–732 B.C. and was in turn assassinated by Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30).

[71] Neither would Judah fall to the Assyrians. Both might be smoke in their nostrils and eyes, but even if it did, God would reserve a remnant for himself.

[72] Haley suggests that this son of Tabeel was a Syrian. Young, citing Alexander, gives evidence that he might have been a son of Uzziah or Jotham by a princess of Tabeel. A letter written before the fall of Damascus in 732 B.C. from the Assyrian archives at Calah (the letter is from the 1953 finds at Nimrud) mentions the land of Tabel. This Aramaic name points to a location north of Ammon and Gilead. Hence, son of Tabel refers to a prince of Judah whose material home was in the land of Tabel in northeastern Palestine or southeastern Syria. Young apparently rejects Alexander's theory because he writes of "this man, the son of Tabeel."

[73] This prophecy reaches beyond the fall of Samaria that occurred just a few years later. It looked to the time that Ephraim "shall not be a people." It was fulfilled when Esar-Haddon, who ruled Assyria and brought foreigners into the land (2 Kings 17:24). When these foreigners intermarried with the Ephramites, Ephraim was no more. Thus the sixty-five years were from the days of Ahaz to sometime in

Ahaz by giving him a choice. Believe and be established; disbelieve and not be established. This is another reason that Ahaz should have believed Isaiah's message. Not only was his own reign at risk. The reign of the house of David was at risk.

But how could that be? God had promised that the house of David would be established forever (2 Sam. 12:7-16). And God kept that promise (Luke 1:32-33). But what happened in the interim? Listen to Jeremiah: "28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken vessel? is he a vessel wherein none delighteth? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not? 29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah. 30 Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah" (Jer. 22:28-30). Jeremiah pronounced the end of the Davidic dynasty. Coniah (aka Jeconiah and Jehoiachin[74]) was not childless (1 Chron 3:17-18). He was childless in the sense that none of his sons ascended to David's throne. It was Zedekiah who followed Jeconiah, having been placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel announced the dethronement of Zedekiah and echoed Isaiah that "for no

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the reign of Esar-Haddon. This prophecy may have been made during the reign of Manasseh. The Bible does not tell us when Manasseh was deported. However, Esar-Haddon's own inscription (681 – 669 B.C.) mention that Manasseh was one of the Hittite kings who was in vassalage to him. If the prophecy was made about 734 B.C., and Manasseh was carried away in 669 B.C., the 18th year of Manasseh's sole rule, and the 27th if the years of co-regency with Ahaz are counted, we have 65 years. Of course, it could be that Isaiah was merely rounding off a number and means no more than that around 670 B.C. Israel would cease to exist as a people. In this case the problem practically vanishes. The message was probably delivered at the beginning of the Syra-Ephraimitic war. At this time Tiglath-pilesar was probably in Philistia (2 Chron. 28:18-20). In Tss B.C. Tiglath-pilesar made his campaign agsinst Damascus. In 732 he placed Hoshea on the throne, and Ahaz began his first year as sole king.

[74] Jehoiachin evidently was a throne name taken at the time of accession to the kingship. Jehoiachin's original name seems to have been Jeconiah or Coniah. He retained the title "king of Judah" even in exile, but he never returned to Judah to exercise rule there. Nevertheless, he was ultimately released from prison by Evil-merodach of Babylon and accorded some honor in the land of his captivity

more shall a man of his seed prosper sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." Ezekiel added that the throne of David "be no more" "until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21:25-27), an obvious reference to the Messiah. Jechonias (Greek spelling) was in the lineage of David through Solomon (Matthew 1:11-12) and Nathan (Luke 3:31), both of whom were sons of David.[75] When Christ ascended to the throne of David he "whose right it is" had come. Christ is the heir to the Davidic throne in heaven, not on earth. And "Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

Vv. 10-17 – The Sign of Immanuel

Isaiah sought to be certain that Ahaz had no reasonable basis to fear the two conspiring kings, he told Ahaz to ask God for a sign. He placed no limits on the sign. It could be either in the depth below or in the height above. It could be natural or supernatural. As Haley says, "It could be an earthquake or lightning, be it something in the sea or in the stellar spaces of the heavens, be it something sensational or something simple – God would give it."

Feigning piety, Ahaz refused to ask a sign. He even alluded to scripture (Deut. 6:16), saying that he would not tempt God. How simple it is to misuse and misapply scripture. He could not have tempted God by asking for a sign when God had requested that he ask. To what end then did he refuse? Could it have been because it a sign would have provided him no useful information because his mind was already made up? Whatever the cause, he rejected Jehovah and chose to walk in his own path.

Ahaz's unbelief brought a quick response from Isaiah. Notice that the response looks beyond Ahaz to the house of David. While Ahaz is in-

[75] The two most common explanations for the dual genealogies are: 1) Matthew gives the genealogy through Joseph and Luke through Mary, or 2) a Levirate marriage. Neither is explicit in scripture. It is an interesting study, but not relevant here.

cluded, it flows through Ahaz to the house of David and through the house of David to the entire nation of Judah. Ahaz was king. His decision affected not only himself, but also the destiny of those who would follow after him and all of those over whom they would rule.

The language that Isaiah uses is significant. 1) In v. 11 he told Ahaz to ask a sign of "Jehovah *thy* God." In v. 13 he refers to Jehovah as "*my* God." Clearly at this point Ahaz's unbelief had had at least one result – the relationship between him and God had been severed. The king had rejected God and God had rejected Ahaz. 2) In vv. 13 and 14, the pronoun "ye" or "you" is plural. Isaiah is not addressing only Ahaz, but is addressing descendants and subjects as well. It is to the entire group that the sign is addressed, not just to Ahaz. Ahaz was out of the picture. The sign that is given is given to the house of David and to Judah.

The sign is one of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. It foresees the virgin birth of Jesus. Several questions arise in connection with various translations of the promise.

1) Some read "the virgin"; some read "a virgin." The Hebrew justifies the "the." Its presence makes the reference to a definite or particular virgin.

2) Most translations render the Hebrew word *almah* as "virgin; some render *'almâh* "young woman." The question raised is not just what does it mean in scripture, but what does it mean in Isa. 7:14. The word *'almâh* also occurs in Gen. 24:43, Ex. 2:8, Psa. 68:25, Song of Sol. 1:3, 6:8, and Prov. 30:19. In each instance it either may or must be translated "virgin." Even if one takes the position that it only "may be" translated "virgin," and it may also be translated "young woman," it then is the case that its meaning must be determined by the context. What does the context of Isa. 7:14 demand? Some suggest that the female in question was a virgin at the time of the prophecy, but then became married and conceived in the natural manner. This is the position of some who espouse that some unnamed never-heard-from-again female was in Isaiah's prophecy. Some try to avoid this by saying that the woman was Isaiah's unnamed wife in 8:2. However, the child that she conceived and delivered was named Maher-shal-al-hash-baz. He probably

wished it had been Immanuel. Additionally, since Isaiah was already married and already had a child his wife was not a virgin. The speculators have no problem with that. They simply assert that Isaiah married a second wife or was involved in a Levirate marriage. Aside from those problems, there is the problem of a prophet giving a sign that involved his own family. In this case all he would have to do would be to impregnate his wife, hope it was a boy, and name it Immanuel. It is easy to be a prophet when you can control your own fulfillment. Finally, what kind of sign would it be when a young woman who was a virgin got pregnant? Either she would be married or she would not be. If she were married, no problem. If she were unmarried and the conception was by natural copulation, there would be the problem of illegitimacy. Maybe that is why, having rejected the virgin birth because it is supernatural, and according to them there is no such thing as supernatural, some still contend that Mary was either raped by or had an affair with a Roman soldier and made up the story to hide her adultery.[76] It was a sign only if the young woman was a virgin when she conceived. There is only one documented occurrence of that – Mary and the Christ child. The word "blasphemy" comes to mind when, concerning the Savior's birth, just the thought of illegitimacy fills unholy minds and passes over unclean lips!

Those who contend for the translation, "young woman," argue that if Isaiah had had a virgin in mind he would have used the Hebrew word *bethulâh*, which, they say, is the word that always means virgin. Once again their Hebrew is mistaken. Read carefully the *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*:

> (*bĕetûlâ*). ***Virgin, maid, maiden***; probably from an unused verb *bātal* "to separate." Although Hebrew lexicons and modern translations generally translate *bĕtûlâ* as "virgin," G. J. Wenham ("Betulah 'A Girl of Marriageable Age,' " VT 22:326–48) and Tsevat (TDOT II, p. 338–43) contest this as the general meaning but prefer "a young (marriageable) maiden." But whereas Wenham does not concede the meaning "virgin" in any text, Tsevat allows this meaning in three out of its fifty–one occurrences (Lev 21:13f; Deut 22:19; Ezk 44:22). In any case, a strong case can be presented that *bĕtûlâ* is not a technical

[76] That is what it would have been considered because she was betrothed.

> term for *irgo inta ʿta* in the OT, a conclusion that has important bearing on the meaning of *ʿalmâ* in Isa 7:14.[77]

Works of the nature of the *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* are interested in their scholarship, not in their theological positions. Case closed. Isaiah is saying that one who was a good woman who had never had intercourse with a man would conceive and bear a son.

But what about Ahaz? How was something that happened some 700 years later a sign to Ahaz? First, the prophecy contained a specific time. That time was determined by the age of the child when he is able to eat "real food," in his case curds and honey, and he knew how to refuse the evil and choose the good. In that day the time was generally considered to be around three years. Some three years later Rezin and Pekah were dead. The part of the prophecy that related wholly to Ahaz's day came to pass. From that Ahaz could and should have concluded that God had not and would not forever turn away from his people – Shear-Jashub – a remnant will return. Ahaz had no part in the remainder of the prophecy. He had sealed the fate of the House of David and there was no return.

Since there is only one woman in history to whom Isaiah's language applies, it is clear that the son of promise is the one of whom Isaiah wrote: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (9:6).

Matthew resolved the issue for believers: "20 But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS;

Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (137). Chicago: Moody Press.

for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us" (Matt. 1:20-23).

One last issue is raised by these verses. Why was the Christ child not named Immanuel? 9:6, cited above, helps us begin to understand. I that passage Isaiah gave a list of names by which Jesus would b e called. If Isaiah meant that Christ would literally be called by all of these names, that would be worse than Mary's calling to "little Immanuel" to come in for dinner. These names were obviously given to define the nature and character of Jesus. By nature Jesus was Immanuel, "God with us." His name was Jesus. That practice was first demonstrated first in Genesis. Adam declared upon Eve's creation that she would be called "woman" because she was taken out of man. He later called her name Eve. The first designation was her nature; the second was her name. When Gabriel appeared to Mary he instructed her to name her child Jesus. He then proceed to declare his nature – he would be great and will be called the Son of the Highest.

Vv. 18-25 – The Devastation from Assyria

God permitted Ahaz to avoid an invasion by Rezin and Pekah, but vv. 18-25 describe the invasion of Judah and the laying waste of the land. "In that day" is the time of the Assyrian invasion. In that day Jehovah will call for the fly (Egypt[78]) and the bee (Assyria[79]). The Egyptian army was numerous like a swarm of flies, but it was not well disciplined. The Assyrian army was disciplined and purposeful. Egypt's rivers are the Nile and its tributaries and canals. Once Jehovah calls for them they will come (v. 19). They will cover the land from the desolate valleys to the clefts of the rocks, the thorn hedges and all pastures. The invasion will be so devastating that Judah is compared to a man who has been stripped by the king of Assyria and then shaved from head to

[78] Egypt was known as a land filled with flies, including the tsetse.
[79] Ancient records speak of Assyria as a land of beekeepers. The bees are symbols of cruelty and danger (Deut. 1:44).

foot, including the beard. It is hard to imagine a greater humiliation than this. Judah will be naked and its wealth stolen (v. 20[80]). They will be so poor that a man will have one cow and two sheep and all the people will have to eat is butter and honey (nothing is said about a biscuit, vv. 21-22). Vineyards will become fields of thorns where hunters will come because the land is fit only for wild animals. People will avoid the pleasant walks that they in pastures and well-kept fields that they once enjoyed, because they have been invaded by briars and thorns. They will be good for nothing but a place for ox and sheep to roam. They will be bereft of people (vv. 23-25).

All of this devastation will be the result of an Assyrian invasion that Ahaz could have avoided if he had trusted in God instead of man.

How important it is that we recognize that "God is with us." Do we recognize how great and wonderful that blessing is? If not, perhaps the failure arises from the fact that we do not recognize the true nature of Jehovah. The God who created the universe and thus exists outside of it (his "transcendence" is yet capable even as an all-powerful supreme Being to enter into relationship with man whom he created (his "immanence"). With the coming of Chirst, "Immanuel" ("God with us") was realized. He is "Christ in you; the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Paul summarized it well: 33 "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; 34 who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:33-39).

[80] Notice in v. 20 that Egypt has disappeared from the picture.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON NINE

CHAPTER EIGHT

Assyria, The Overwhelming Flood

Vv. 1-4 – The Sign – Maher-shalal-hash-baz

In chapter 7 King Ahaz refused to listen the Isaiah's message. In chapter 8 Isaiah speaks to the people to warn them. He also gives them a sign, but the people choose to follow their king instead of their God.

Isaiah is instructed to acquire a great tablet upon which he is to write "For Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (*the spoil speeds, the prey hastens)*. Jehovah added that he would acquire witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, who would record the event. While this Zechariah is otherwise unknown[81], Uriah the priest may be the Uriah who, as recorded in 2 Kings 16:10-13, built the replica of the temple that Ahaz had seen on his visit to Tiglath-pilesar. It is always good to have a witness from the other camp.

Having received Jehovah's instruction, Isaiah went in unto his wife, the prophetess[82], and she conceived, bore a son, and named him as God commanded. Verse 4 gives the reason for the name. The life of the child is to be the measure of time before which "the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria. It is to happen "before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother." This limits the interval to from two to three years. It came to pass when during the reign of Pekah the people of northern Israel were carried away into captivity (722 BC; 2 Kings 15:29). When Isaiah foretold that which was to come the spoil was speeding

[81] Although some speculate him to be the father of Abi (or Abijah), the father of Ahaz's queen (2 Kings 18:2; 2 Chron. 29:1).

[82] No reason is given for her being called "the prophetess." There is no record that she actually prophesied. Thus it may be that the appellation was applied to her because she was married to Isaiah.

and the prey was hastening. Not only was that true, but for Northern Israel it was the beginning of the end[83]. Tigleth-pileser annexed Israel to his empire and received tribute through Pekah's reign and into Hoshea's, the last king of Israel. Hoshea rebelled against Shalmaneseer V, Tigleh-Pileser's successor (2 Kings 16:9; 17:3-4); the end had come.[84]

Vv. 5-8 – The Overwhelming Flood

Even if Ahaz is given the benefit of the doubt by assuming that all he wanted to do was to protect his people, there is a right way and a wrong way to go about it. Ahaz had had the prophet of God standing in his presence and telling him that if he truly wanted protection he should trust Jehovah. In spite of his message from God Ahaz sought safety through Assyria. In spite of their warning the people courted disaster for themselves. Having been rejected by both king and people, in these verses God tells Isaiah what is to happen. They had rejected the waters of Shiloh[85] and rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son; they will receive the waters that they have chosen – the strong and mighty waters of the army of Assyria that will flow over its banks and sweep onward to Judah. It will overflow and pass through Judah reaching even to the neck (Jerusalem, the head, would not be reached), and the stretching out of its wings will fill the breadth of the land. In the last of the verses Isaiah changes from a river to a predator of the sky[86]. It has made a critical mistake – it has invaded Immanuel's land. Immanuel's land and the city would not be destroyed. God had promised the birth

[83] It is true that Tiglath-pileser only conquered Damascus, and not Samaria; but he took from Pekah, the king of Samaria, the land beyond the Jordan, and a portion of the land on this side. The trophies, which he took thence to Assyria, were no less the spoil of Samaria than if he had conquered Samaria itself (which Shalmanassar did twenty years afterwards).

[84] Tigleth-Pileser's annals confirm the event. They state that this monarch "sent the population, the goods of the people of Beth-Omri, and their furniture to the land of Assyria;" after which he "appointed Husih (Hoshea) to the dominion over them," and fixed their annual tribute at two talents of gold and a thousand talents of silver.

[85] This may be either the place where Isaiah met Ahaz or a small stream that flowed from the temple area into the southeastern section of the city.

[86] A quick change of metaphors is common with Isaiah. See 1:30-31; 5:24, 30; etc.

of Immanuel and the land and city in which he would be born and the Zion to which he would come would not be utterly destroyed.

Vv. 9-15 – Only Jehovah Shall Be Your Fear

With assurance from Jehovah that Immanuel will come and that he will be with the faithful few, Isaiah proceeds to taunt the heathen nations. They may roar, but the will be broken in pieces. All of the far countries are invited to gird themselves but they also will be broken into pieces. For emphasis Isaiah repeats it twice. They make take counsel together to defeat Judah, but the conspiracy will come to naught. They may speak their word, planning and plotting the destruction of God's people, but it will not stand. Why? "God is with us." Here the phrase is not a name, but it is an appropriate name with the emphasis on Immanuel in this context. Jehovah promised to be with his people, but many in Israel and Judah refused to believe that God would keep his promise.

V. 11 is an explanatory clause that at first seems to be a completely different subject. It really stands in close connection with the triumphant words of vv. 9-10. It is Immanuel to whom they should hold fast as their refuge in the approaching times of Assyrian judgment. God begins this explanation with a one-way conversation with Isaiah telling him in no uncertain terms ("with a strong hand[87]") not to walk in the way of this people. This people (not "my people") distrusted Jehovah and sought Assyrian aid. Isaiah is not to pay attention to their ways. He is to separate himself from the mass of his countryman in thought and feeling and to cling only to Jehovah.

Isaiah is further instructed not to say "a conspiracy," even though that is the charge made by "this people." Who is the conspirator? Some see the conspirators as Rezin and Pekah as they collaborated to defeat Ahaz. There is no question but that they did join together for the battle. But the next language, "neither fear ye their fear, nor be in dread thereof" seems to point in a different direction. It seems that when the

[87] of urgency of 'y's hand in prophetic inspiration. *Brown-Driver-Briggs* Hebrew and English Lexicon.

people cried "conspiracy" it was aimed at Isaiah. It was Isaiah who was trying to persuade the people not to seek foreign aid from Assyria. Isaiah's action was contrary to what the King and the people wanted to do. Thus, they considered Isaiah as a conspirator with Rezin and Pekah seeking to remove Assyria from the picture so that Isaiah's conspirators could defeat Judah. Isaiah was not only a conspirator; he was a traitor. Isaiah was not to fear either their charge against him or the opposing armies that they feared. He is to sanctify Jehovah and let him be his fear and dread.[88] If Judah is to be come upon violently and suddenly, it will be by the hand of Jehovah. Jehovah will be a sanctuary (v. 14) to his own, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Isa. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:8) to all others (v. 15).[89]

Vv. 16-18 – Bind Up the Testimony

Both King and people had refused to hear Isaiah's preaching and prophesying. This led God to command that the testimony and the law be sealed. The concept here seems to be, "File this away for future use." Isaiah does just that and will wait for Jehovah to fulfill his prophecy and confirm that which Isaiah had declared. God has given signs through Isaiah's children: trouble is coming ("hasten the prey") but all is not lost ("a remnant will return"). Notice that a sign need not be a miracle. Miracle or not, they had behind them the power of Jehovah who dwelt in Zion. God will ultimately fulfill his promise through Immanuel.

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[88] *(maʿărāṣâ)* ***awful shock, crash*** (Isa 10:33). *Brown Driver Briggs, A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 1905.

The verb זָרַע denotes fear or terror; transitively, "to cause terror," or intransitively, "to be terrified." The Hebrew root may be compared with a Syriac root, "to come upon suddenly, violently," and the Arabic *ʿaraṣa* "to quiver, flicker." Hebrew synonyms include אָרַי "to fear;" רָחַם "to tremble;" הוּג "to be afraid;" רָגַז "to be afraid;" שָׂעַר "to bristle with horror; and תָּתָה "to be shattered, filled with terror." *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*

[89] Jehovah will also be "for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." "Gin" is a word with which we are not familiar as used here. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines it as "I, ***bird trap*** (e.g. Hos 5:1; Amos 3:5). Often used figuratively for calamities and plots.

Vv. 19-22 – To the Law and to the Testimony

Over and over Isaiah has warned about turning to idols or other sources for knowledge (1:21; 2:6, 20; 3:2-3). In v. 19 that warning is repeated. In seeking safety the people will request consultation with dabblers in magic and spirits who can do nothing but chirp and mutter, when they ought to be seeking guidance from their God. How foolish they were to seek knowledge of the living from the dead (v. 19). The path of safety (salvation) lay in going to the law and to the testimony. Sad indeed is the language, "if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them. (v. 20). It gets no better as the chapter closes. When Assyria invades they will stumble along in hunger and darkness, fretting among themselves and cursing by their King and by their God.[90] They will turn their faces upward, look unto the earth, and find nothing but distress, darkness, and anguish. In the end they will be driven away into thick darkness.

How often do we ask as we reap a harvest of foolish sowing, "Why is God doing this to me?" In our day of "feel good" religion we don't hear much about fearing God. We demand that God love use no matter what we do and that he never leave us or forsake us even if we forsake his way. We may say that we must always do our best, but since God is under obligation to love us no matter what, we never demand very much from ourselves. It was this type of thinking that led God to tell his people to stop worrying about what Assyria could do to them and start thinking about what Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, could do.

God will either be a sanctuary or a stumbling bock over which we keep falling. God does not change and he certainly does not change in how he deals with rebellious children and unbelievers. It is true that even faithful children suffer, but faithful children know that beyond the suffering there is light, not darkness. There is beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isa. 61:3).

[90] The ASV margin is preferable: they shall curse their King and their God. They will not blame themselves so they blame their King and their God.

God is teaching us that we cannot exclude him from our world. We can exclude him from our lives and, like the rich fool, become practical atheists. All we accomplish, however, is a God-shaped vacuum that we try to fill with possessions, pleasure, diversions, work, and power. However, we can never fill that space with material things. No created thing can fill it. No personal relationship can fill it. All we accomplish is to keep stumbling over God.

Some may say that they have seen it work pretty well. After all, it is depicted every day on the television. But even if you believe the fiction portrayed there, and even if it in fact works "pretty well" some of the time, the one beckoning at the end of the way is life's most inescapable reality – Death. In the end he mocks all of our attempts to make life without God (Psa. 73:13-20; Eccl. 9:3). The choice is ours. Will God be a sanctuary or a stumbling block?

CHAPTER NINE

The Dawning Light

Vv. 1-3 – Light Shines in Darkness

Chapter eight closed with darkness. Chapter nine begins by declaring that it would not always be that way. It will not always be dark to the land that is now in distress. There will be a restoration of light, but not for the present generation. In the latter time it will be glorious. Morning is coming, but it is not coming to Judah first. The darkness came first to Zebulun and Naphtali and they shall be the first to see the light – "there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish." Isaiah is seeing the future from the present and he uses the prophetic perfect to "declar[e] the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done (46:10).

Instead of darkness there shall be light; instead of death there shall be life (v. 2). This prophecy was declared fulfilled in Jesus (Matt. 4:12-16) as he preached in Zebulun and Naphtali near the sea of Galilee.

The nation was multiplied by an influx of Gentiles flowing into it (2:2). This would bring joy as great as that from a good harvest or from victors dividing the spoil.

Vv. 4-7 – The Basis of This Joy

The basis for the joy is that there is no more burdensome yoke, no more beating by staff across back or shoulder, and no more oppressor wielding a rod. They are all broken as in the day of Midian, whom they had served seven years. Instead, they will walk in the glorious light of freedom, a freedom that came from God's deliverance from Midian through Gideon (Judges 6-8). The armor of the armed man and his bloody garments will be nothing more than fuel for the fire. Once again God emphasizes that this new kingdom will be one of peace and will not seek to extend itself by power and war. Spiritual Israel will have armor, but it will be spiritual armor for its spiritual battle "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Isa. 2:2-4; Hos. 2:18; Zech. 9:10; Eph. 6:10-18).

In Vv. 6-7 we come to the real basis for the joy. The one of whom Isaiah spoke in 7:14 has come – unto us a child is born, a son is given. The "names" by which he shall be called are descriptions of his nature and character. He is Wonderful; he is Counsellor;[91] he is Mighty God; he is Everlasting Father; he is Prince of Peace. Surely Paul did not overstate his nature when he asserted that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). He shall be king upon whose shoulders the government shall be. There shall be no end to the increase of his government and of peace as he sits upon the throne of David ruling over and establishing his kingdom, upholding it with justice and righteousness forever (Dan. 2:44). How shall all of this come to pass? What certainty do we have other than Isaiah's continued used of the Prophetic Perfect? "The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this."

[91] Some translations render these first two appellations as "Wonderful Counsellor." Forests have been felled and oceans of ink have been used in the debate over which is correct. What a waste of time to worry about such details in such wonderful language!

Vv. 8-12 – The Arrogance of Ephraim

There is an abrupt change of subject in v. 8 as Isaiah turns 180 degrees to God's judgment. It reminds of the swift change between 2:2-4 and 2:5-7. Isaiah's mind may have been turned by the mention of justice and righteousness. Perhaps the word "zeal" in v. 7 brought to mind God's wrath against sin (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). The refrain with which each of the following paragraphs concludes, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still," was first introduced in 5:25. In fact, using a modern phrase, the people's response to God was "Bring it on." Bricks may be made of clay and thus be fragile; destroy them and we will build of hewn stone. All of our sycamores may be cut down, but so what? We will replace them with the choicest of lumber, the cedars of Lebanon (v. 10). God's response is that he will set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin and will stir up his enemies. The Syrians will attack from the front and the Philistines from the rear, and they will devour Israel with an open mouth as a wild beast devours its prey (vv. 11-12).

Vv. 13-17 – Israel to Be Cut Off, Head and Tail

In spite of it all the people have not learned their lesson; they have not turned unto the one who smote them, nor have they sought Jehovah of hosts (v. 13); there has been no repentance. God has no choice left and his hand of punishment is still outstretched (v. 12). Assyria will be unleashed; Israel will be cut off head (the elder and the honorable man, v. 15) and tail (the prophet that teacheth lies, v. 15), palm-branch (at the top of the tree; another description of the elder and honorable man) and rush (marsh grass, lowly and abased), in one day (v. 14). They deserve no more because they lead the people astray and cause them to err (v. 16). God will not rejoice over their young men[92] because all, including the fatherless and widows,[93] are profane and evil-doers who speak folly (v. 17). Once again we hear the refrain: "For all this his an-

[92] It was the young men who were used to fight their wars. Instead of protecting them, God will permit their enemies to destroy them

[93] Those whom God formerly protected and whose mistreatment he punished will no longer be the objects of his compassion and protection.

ger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." It's not over; there is more to come.

Vv. 18-21 – The Devouring Fire: Wickedness and Civil War

The northern kingdom is on fire, a fire fueled by wickedness. It begins with the briars and thorns, the easiest to ignite, and then moved to the thickets in the forest and turned them into a billow of smoke rolling up to the sky (18). The fire that burns is evidence of the wrath of God for their conduct. Not only the land, but the people are fuel for the fire. If they had known the law of God and walked in his way it could have been avoided. If they had known the law of God they would have known that their conduct would lead to their destruction. God had warned that the man who walked in stubbornness of heart would see God's anger and jealousy smoke against him and all the curses written in this book would lie upon him (Deut. 29:20). The destruction led to divisions even in families as brother turned against brother (19).

There was not only the foreign invaders – Assyria, Syria, and Philistia – but the northern tribes were also being torn apart by civil war. Neighbor was stealing from neighbor and desperation led to self-cannibalism. Still their hunger is not satisfied. Ephraim fights with Manasseh and Manasseh with Ephraim. The only thing on which these two sons of Joseph could agree was to fight with Judah. For all these reasons God's anger is not turned away; his hand is stretched out still.

To all of these things Judah may be saying "Amen." However, Isaiah has been using some principles in discussing the northern tribes that he is fixing to apply to Judah. Judah's "Amens" will be silenced.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON TEN

CHAPTER TEN

The Use and Doom of Assyria

Vv. 1-4 – Visitation and Desolation

Isaiah has not been silent in speaking of the sins of Judah's unrighteous leaders. He now speaks directly against them because they have served their own personal desires and corrupted justice. The first thing he does is to describe their perversions (1). This has a twofold effect upon the people. First, it denies justice to the needy and second, it robs the people of their right at the court, depriving the poor of the little that they have. Widows are their spoil and the poor are their prey (2).

Isaiah then asks three questions (3). First, what are you going to do when the invasion comes with the desolation that accompanies it? "Day of visitation" may be a blessing, but its almost universal use in the Old Testament is that it is a day of judgment. There is no question here because Isaiah tells them that the desolation is coming from afar. That leads to the second question, "To whom will you flee for help?" They have rejected the Holy One of Israel, and Jehovah of hosts is now sending Assyria against them. Who is going to help you when the very one on whom you relied is coming against you and the only one who could have helped has been rejected? That leads to the third and final question, "Where will you leave your wealth (ESV, "glory," ASV)?" There is no one who can keep it safe and guard it for you. The glory of their land and the glory of their political position will all be destroyed. There is no escape.

As for the judges themselves, they will be made to bow down. They refused to bow down to Jehovah; now they will bow down to prisoners in cells or fall down before prisoners through weakness. As marching captives they may fall underneath those killed in battle. Clearly God is using heathen nations to accomplish his purpose. However, no punishment that God has inflicted has led to repentance. Therefore, his anger is not turned away and his hand is still stretched out.

Vv. 5-11 – Assyria: Jehovah's Rod

God's people had run away from their Father and their home and, despite Jehovah's best efforts, his children continued to rebel. Through Isaiah he now identifies the weapon that his still stretched-out hand was going to loosen on his people – Assyria. Isaiah makes clear that

God was going to use a heathen nation to punish his people and accomplish his purpose. He used Assyria against Ephraim and Judah as he was to later use Babylon to destroy Assyria and to carry Judah into captivity (Habakkuk 1:5-11). After the Babylonians had served his purpose, God raised up the Medes to be his arrows against Babylon (Isa. 13:17; 44:28-45:7; Jer. 51:11,28). When the Medes has served his purpose, he unleashed Alexander of Macedonia against the Medo-Persian empire to destroy it. One by one the heathen nations served the purpose of God to establish his eternal kingdom.

Isaiah has not forgotten the coming Messiah. The judgments from 9:8 to 10:31 fit into the Messianic pattern of chapters 7-12. Israel and Judah must be made to realize that they are not ready for the Messiah to come. Wickedness must be judged and the heathen nations must be destroyed before the spiritual kingdom is brought in. Upon the fall of the world's powers, epitomized by Assyria, the power of Immanuel would arise, the Son of God and Son of David. God would be with his people in the mighty shoot of Jesse (ch. 11).

Isaiah now turns his attention to Assyria. He has pronounced woes upon Judah (Ch. 5), upon himself (6:5), and against the unjust judges of the land. He addresses the nation generically; no one king is named. The Assyrian nation, including all of its people, is in view. Assyria is the rod in God's hand that he will use against his people. His indignation is in the Assyrian's hand to be used against Judah, a profane nation. God in his wrath will give the Assyrians charge to take spoil, to take the prey, and to tread Judah down like the mire of the street (5-6). Assyria doesn't know what is going on. It does not mean to help fulfill God's purpose and it does not think it is. Assyria believes that it is conquering many nations on its own. And that is what it has set about to do (7).

Is there a contradiction between v. 7 and 2 Kings 18:25? Rabshakeh, Sennacherab's field commander, there said, "Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it." Isaiah says that Assyria had no idea that it was doing God's work; Rabshakeh says that God told them to do it. Can both be correct? First, keep in mind the basic principle

that inspiration does not guarantee that everything in scripture is true; it guarantees that everything is truthfully reported. A good example is Genesis 3:4. Where inspiration truthfully reports the Devil's lie, "Thou shalt not surely die." Second, Rabshakeh's statement in 2 Kings 18:25 is truthfully reported. Third, the issue then becomes, "Was Rabshakeh's truthfully reported statement true or false?" The answer to that question must begin with the basic truth that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). Both Isaiah and Rabshakeh claim that God spoke to them, yet the two messages claimed are contradictory. Since both claim that God was the source, and since God cannot lie, it follows that either Isaiah or Rabshakeh must be lying. Which is it? That decision is easy, especially in hindsight. Everything that Isaiah said came to pass; Rabshakeh's boasts did not. Rabshakeh failed the test of Deut. 18:15-22. Where, then did Rabshakeh get his information? Is it not likely that he had heard of the prophecies of Judean prophets that Assyria would come against the land and he was using that information to his advantage in his attempt to persuade Jerusalem to surrender without a battle? That makes a great deal more sense than to conclude that God spoke to Sennacherab. True, God sent dreams to Pharaoh and Belshazzar and wrote on Nebuchadnezzar's wall, but he sent Joseph and Daniel to interpret them. He sent Moses and Aaron to speak to Pharaoh. There is no record of God's speaking directly to a king of a heathen nation. Both God and the angel of the Lord (theophany?) spoke to Balaam[94] and then God caused an ass to speak to him (Numbers 22). In the New Testament, Pilate's wife reported a dream (Matt. 27:19), but there is no indication if it was a dream sent by the Lord or the type dream that many have in this day and age. In either case it was a dream the contents of which we do not know and that required no interpretation.

The Assyrian's former conquests leads to great boasting. He has captured many kings and they and their military leaders are now in Assyria's army. He has a king for every captain. He has captured many

[94] Balaam, the son of Beor, was from Pethor in Mesopotamia (Dt 23:4). Balaam is the only instance where God spoke directly to a heathen. God also directly controlled the outcome of the event concerning which he spoke to Balaam.

cities, six of which he lists in strategic order beginning in the north and moving south toward Jerusalem (8-9).

In verses 10 and 11 the Assyrian brags that the reason he had won all these victories was because his gods were stronger than the gods of those whom he was fighting. He asserts that he will do the same to "Jerusalem and her idols." What he fails to realize is that Jerusalem's God begins with a capital "G." He is fixing to learn about Jerusalem's God.

Vv. 12–19 – The Assyrian's Boast and Jehovah's Response

God has heard the boastful assertions of the Assyrian and the arrogant boast that Assyria's gods will defeat the God of Judah. God now sets the record straight. The Lord is concerned at the moment with purging Judah, but when he has finished that work he will handle the pride of Assyria (12). The Assyrian boasts that what he did he did by the power of his own hand and by his own wisdom and understanding. He removed the bounds of the peoples; he robbed their treasures; be brought down their kings; he gathered the riches of the peoples over all the earth and there was not one that lifted a hand against him or so much as cheeped (13-14). Jehovah attacks his wisdom head on with penetrating questions. Does an axe claim that it was that which brought down the forest and that he who held the axe had nothing to do with it? Does a saw claim that it alone cut the wood and that he who wielded it played no part in the cutting. Another metaphor follows: to answer either of the questions "yes" makes no more sense than saying that a rod holds up the one who holds it or that a staff can lift up him who is not wood, *i.e.*, the one who holds it (v. 15). This God who was "defeated" by Assyria has finished with them and will now demonstrate that he is the true and living God by sending leanness (disease) among the members of his army and among his people. Fire speeds through his country as easily it ravages a forest (16). Israel and its God will be the fire and the flame and it will rapidly burn even the thorns and briers, the lowest members of the army. It will be accomplished in one day, perhaps a reference to the destruction of the Assyrian army in one night (37:36).

How thorough will the destruction be? It will destroy the glory of his forest (he valiant army), his fruitful field (the nation), both body and soul (completely). It will be like a standard-bearer fainting (margin: "as when a sick man pineth away"). Like one who has become ill and weak, the nation will be reduced to nothing. The military and the population will become so few that a mere child can count them (18-19).

Vv. 20-23 – A Remnant Shall Return

Judah, that which Assyria vowed to destroy, will survive while Assyria will turn victory into defeat and destruction and a remnant of the house of Israel will return. This remnant will not lean upon Assyria that smote it; it will lean upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth, as it returns to the Mighty God (20-21; recall 9:6). The promise expressed in Shear-jashub's name will be fulfilled. They will no longer be as the sand of the sea. Paul quoted this passage and applied it to the Jews who were saved (Rom. 9:27). Both Assyria and Judah, but it is a destruction overflowing with righteousness, *i.e.*, it will be a righteous judgment. Just as the Assyrian judgment against Judah came like an overflowing river (8:7-8), so the ultimate destruction of the nation, based on righteous judgment, will come as an overwhelming flood (vv. 20-22).

God will make an end of it all (v. 23). This does not refer to the final judgment, but to the end of the process by which God is working to fulfill his promise. It will happen in time – "in the midst of all the earth." This prepares us for chapters 13-23 in which the judgment of the heathen nations is announced, and chapters 24-27 in which this general world judgment is described.

Vv. 24-34 – Be Not Afraid! Though on His Way, the Assyrian Shall Be Brought Low

Based on the foregoing the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, pleads with those that dwell in Zion not to be afraid of Assyria even though Assyria would smite them with rod and staff in the manner of Egypt. There will be a short time and the punishment will be over and the wrath that led to their punishment will be directed at Assyria. Assyria will be defeated as fully as Gideon destroyed the Midianites (Judges 7). It will

be a destruction as great as that of the Egyptians when Moses lowered his staff. In that day the yoke that Assyria placed upon Judah will be removed and destroyed. Judah will be so blessed that it will outgrow the yoke and burst it (vv. 24-27).

Assyria is on its way. Step by step Isaiah describes Assyria's sweep across the land toward Jerusalem. He is not describing the actual approach that came from the southwest, but an approach that would strike terror in the hearts of his hearers, especially the inhabitants of the cities mentioned. As Isaiah identifies the cities he describes their reactions. They are terrified, they flee, they cry out, they hear the shrieks of their sister cities. It is at Nob, a Levitical city only two miles from Jerusalem, that Assyria stops and shakes its fist at Zion. He is making the mistake of claiming victory before the battle begins (28-32; see, 1 Kings 20:11).

Jehovah sees the scene differently. Returning to the figure of a forest (v. 19), Isaiah describes how Jehovah will inflict his own terror on Assyria; he will lop the boughs with terror and bring the haughty low. We might say he will bring them down to size. The mountain of Lebanon, symbolizing all that is powerful in the world, stands over against Mount Zion and all that it represents – the city of God and the symbol of his presence and power. It's a one-sided battle; Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one, the one who inhabits Mount Zion. There is no reason to fear. Better things lie ahead for God's faithful remnant (33-34).

"Religion is the opiate of the people," or so said Karl Marx. It's too bad that Karl Marx, who died in 1883, was not around to see the Berlin Wall come down 106 years later, followed by the collapse of the Russian empire. Of course, by that date Marc had probably changed his mind about God. Perhaps Karl dines with Adolph Hitler, a much later example of one who set about to destroy anything that was religious. He is also a much later example of one who denounced the God of the Bible. Assyria and Babylon were great nations, but their own skills had little to do with their success. God's hand was in it all. God's hand was in their rising and in their setting. He controlled them just as he does the sun and moon. It is certainly true that Germany, England, France, and the United States did not become more religious after Hitler's defeat.

In fact, religion in the United States is perhaps at its lowest point in the history of the nation even as we meet. Is there perhaps some connection between that fact and the financial and moral struggles that our country is presently experiencing?

The question is whether we will ever learn the lesson that nation after nation and government after government have learned over the centuries. Those who either ignore God or rebel against him do not well. Our nation is not God. Our treasure, our military, our knowledge, is not God. The Lord God is one God. Beside him there is none other. As soon as we place ourselves on his throne we will meet our Waterloo. That is one battle we cannot win. Romans 1:21 was written about the heathen, but is there a possibility that it speaks to us: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." If "pride goes before destruction (Prov. 16:18) applies to nations as well as people, the United States of America, which appears to be arrayed in full battle armor against God, is surely at the top of the list. True, there are more ungodly nations, but not one that at the same time is always asking for his blessing in every way from presidential proclamations to minting pennies.

Since we have elevated the created to the place of the Creator, we now worship the creation, a form of self-worship. We should not be surprised that secularism is the mode of the day. It keeps us from having to go outside of ourselves to find a god to worship. Perhaps that is why we give ourselves credit for any success, giving no thanks to God, while we blame God, taking no blame upon ourselves, for our failures. The God of Isaiah who controls nations and who created all that is, calls upon us to change, and then to serve him in his efforts to change the world.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The King, His Subjects, and the Remnant

Vv. 1-5 – The Shoot of Jesse

Turmoil is not new to the world. The prophecy of Isaiah is filled with turmoil. Assyria is on the move and will invade Samaria and Israel. Israel will be carried into captivity. Jerusalem and Judah will suffer from the invasion, but will be saved by an act of God. Assyria will be destroyed and its military power will end. In spite of avoiding Assyrian captivity, Judah is still suffering. In the midst of this darkness, Isaiah has a message of hope. Whatever befalls Judah, a remnant will survive. In addition, Isaiah provides Judah with an enlarged picture of David's descendant who would sit on David's throne. In these opening verses Isaiah sets forth his nature and his character. There will be great differences between the earthly kingdom and the spiritual kingdom. That which is human is subject to decay. The new spiritual kingdom and its King will not be subject to decay. That which is physical will pass away; the spiritual kingdom will never be destroyed.

The house of David has so decayed (see Amos 9:11) that Isaiah does not refer to it by its name but by the name of David's father. Although it has decayed and has been brought low, unlike Assyria that is dead and has no life in it, in Judah there will be a stump that retains life and from it's roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit. Out of the Branch will come God's King and God's mighty Kingdom.

The spirit of Jehovah will rest upon the Branch. This was fulfilled at Jesus' baptism when the Spirit descended upon him (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). Isaiah lists six characteristics of the Spirit with which the Spirit will endow the Branch. 1) He is the Spirit of wisdom. 2) He is the Spirit of understanding. 3) He is the Spirit of counsel. 4) He is the Spirit of might. 5) He is the Spirit of knowledge. 6) He is the Spirit of the fear of Jehovah. Wisdom is the ability to see the causes and consequences of statements and actions; understanding enables one to use wisdom's insight to make a correct decision. Counsel is right direction in preparing a plan or solving a problem; might is the ability to execute the plan to a successful conclusion. Knowledge includes and is based on a comprehension of both God and man; the fear of Jehovah is reverence and proper regard for God, his will, and his glory. All of these characteristics will characterize the service of the Branch. The fear of Jehovah will be the delight of the Branch. The

Branch will do nothing under compulsion except as he is compelled by the fear of Jehovah. He will not render judgment based on human standards or outward appearance (what he can see and hear), but by wisdom, understanding, true knowledge and the inner spirit of those being judged. The poor will not be deprived of righteous judgment or the meek of equity or fairness. Those who have oppressed the poor and meek will be judged accordingly. The Branch will smite the earth (the ungodly) with the rod of his mouth, and he shall slay the wicked (parallel to the ungodly) with the breath of his lips (judicial decisions).

Returning to the Branch, He shall be robed in righteousness and faithfulness. The girdle firmly secures the rest of the garments; righteousness is his breastplate and faithfulness to the truth (see, Eph. 6:14). He is well prepared to defeat the wicked and ungodly.

Vv. 6-10 – The Character of the Citizens

What shall be the conditions of the kingdom of the Branch? Isaiah describes it by naming natural enemies and declaring that there shall be peace, a peace that is only found for those dwelling on Mt. Zion. The illustrations that Isaiah uses to describe the peace can no more be taken literally than the rod in the mouth of Jesus. Isaiah is describing the conditions that shall exist for those who dwell in the kingdom of God and who have been transformed by undergoing a spiritual and moral "creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). That transformation overcomes the "flesh" (carnal nature of man) so that those so transformed do not hurt or destroy one another. Their life has been brought under the spirit and will of Christ; old things have passed away and all things have become new. They have been crucified with Christ, yet they live (Gal. 2:20), for they have been raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

The next verse (v. 10) confirms that Isaiah has not been speaking of some millennial reign of Christ. To the contrary, it will come to pass "in that day" (the Messianic age). It is the same day described in chapter 2 when all nations will flow unto Mt. Zion and the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem. It is the same day that the shoot of Jesse will bear fruit. It is the same day that the Shoot of Jesse will be an en-

sign serving as a rallying place to which the nations come. He will be the rallying point for both Gentiles and Jews (Rom. 15:12). Under these conditions his resting place will be glorious. This promise is fulfilled in Christ now; the Gentiles have hope. That being the case, the Messiah (Shoot of Jesse) is reigning now. He has restored the Davidic line and he receives the throne of his father, David (Luke 1:32). His Kingdom is not yet to be established. It has already been established and the saved are subjects therein, having been translated into it from the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13).[95]

Vv. 11-16 – The Remnant

The Lord now sets his hand a second time to restore his remnant. The first restoration was from Babylon captivity under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.[96] The second restoration comes in the day of the Shoot of Jesse, the Messianic age (Rom. 15:12). His remnant would be recovered from all the earth (v. 11), which has been an ongoing restoration since the establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

The ensign established will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The hostility between Judah and Ephraim will cease and they will dwell together as one (vv. 12-13).

Judah and Ephraim will "fly down upon the shoulder"[97] of the Philistines to the west and despoil the children of the east. They will also "put forth their hand" upon their two ancient enemies, Edom and Moab. God, whose hand is in it all, will destroy the tongue of the Egyptian

[95] Much more could be said concerning the establishment and present existence of the Kingdom. However, the fact of its establishment and present existence is demonstrated by the cited verses and that is what is relevant for the present purpose. Those who desire more information on that subject are referred to "Classes; The Church; Lesson 2" on this website.

[96] In the first restoration only Judah was restored. In the second restoration both Judah and Ephraim are expressly specified (Ezek. 37:16-19; Jer. 3:18).

[97] Some suggest that this refers to a descent from the hills to the plain. Others suggest that it is an attack from behind.

sea, a probable reference to the waters crossed in the deliverance from Egypt, and, as then, let the exodus cross on dry ground (vv. 14-15). All shall live together in peace (vv. 6-9). Zechariah 9:10 describes it well: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."

For the returning remnant there shall be a way prepared for those freed from Assyria – a highway.[98] It will be as great as the deliverance when the people of God came up from Egypt (Isa. 51:10-11). As then, it will not be a human highway, but a way provided by Jehovah (Rom. 11:5; Isa. 19:23; 35:8).

It is unfortunate that that many commentators cannot see over the wall of millennialism when they come to this passage. What they fail to realize is that this restoration speaks of the inclusion of the Gentiles. Gentiles were certainly not involved in the first restoration except to the extent Cyrus participated as God's "anointed" in freeing God's people. This puts the commentators in rather precarious position since they are Gentiles and if this passage is not now being fulfilled the Gentiles still have no hope (Eph. 2:11-12).

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON ELEVEN

CHAPTER TWELVE

Rejoicing and Thanksgiving of the Remnant

Chapter 12 begins by connecting with the end of chapter 11, specifically with the redemption of the remnant which identifies what is meant by "in that day." The deliverance of God's people, the remnant, will evoke thanks to Jehovah that his anger has turned away and he now seeks to

[98] The mountains will be leveled, the rough places shall be smoothed, and there will be neither obstructions nor obtacles.

comfort (v. 1). How different this language is from that with which prior refrains were concluded – his hand is stretched out still. God is praised as the source of salvation; he is trusted for security; he is looked to for strength (v. 2). Those forgiven and redeemed are satisfied for they draw waters out of the wells of salvation (3). This language is similar to the song of Moses on deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15:2). Joy should always be characteristic of the redeemed. How can it be otherwise, for we too drink the water of life from the wells of salvation (Rev. 21:6; 22:1, 17; John 4:14).

One of the Psalmists wrote, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psa. 107:2). Isaiah urges the same: say it in thanks to Jehovah; say it calling upon his name; say it by declaring his doings among the peoples; say it by exalting his name and making it known; say it by declaring his excellent deeds; say it by making all these things known throughout the whole earth. Cry it aloud and shout it for "in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel" (vv. 4-6).

One of the beautiful characteristics of Paul's writings is the frequency with which he breaks forth in a doxology praising the God of Heaven for his new creation and the salvation that it brings. Clearly he did not take for granted the spiritual blessings bestowed upon him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3), and neither should we. How can we not faithfully worship him in spirit and in truth and proclaim his name and salvation among men?

SECTION TWO

Oracle of Judgment Against Individual Nations (13-23)

Introductory Comments on Section Two

Section Two of Isaiah's prophecy declares the future of ten nations. One of the prophecies relates to Judah, and two relate to Babylon (13:1 - 14:27; 21:1-10). Isaiah has already dealt with the fall of Assyria (ch. 10) and the coming of God's kingdom from the Sprout of David (chs. 7-11). Now he addresses the future of the heathen nations whose actions re-

late to the people of God. God will use the heathen nations to accomplish his purpose, and then they will be destroyed before God's kingdom is established.

There are at least two issues related to these chapters. 1) when were they written, and 2) was Isaiah the author, especially insofar as these chapters relate to Babylon. While there are some time indicators in these chapters,[99] for the most part no time is stated nor are there time indicators from which the time can be determined.

It is the absence of time indicators that leads liberal theologians to conclude that Isaiah could not have written the chapters that pertain to Babylon. After all, they assert, Assyria was the dominant world power at this time and, to the extent Babylon existed, it was subject to Assyria. What could possibly have indicated at the time Isaiah wrote that Babylon would ever replace Assyria and the ruler of the world? This being the case, they conclude, Isaiah could not have written chs. 13:1-14:27. That in turn means that these chapters were not written by Isaiah during his lifetime, but must have been written by someone else at a much later date when Assyria was gone and Babylon had become dominant.[100]

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[99] 14:38 identifies the year of the death of Ahaz (715 B.C.) as the time at which Isaiah received the prophecy related to Philistia. The date of Tartan's coming to Ashdod (713 B.C.) was the time at which Isaiah was commanded to give a symbolic message to Judah (ch. 20).

[100] These specious arguments are dealt with here and have already been dealt with in the introduction. This information should be remembered when studying chs 21 and 29 (dealing with Babylon), and chs. 44:28-45:7 where hundreds of years before the birth of Cyrus he was named as the deliverer from Assyria. There are other references throughout the book that raise the same issue. There are two basic positions: 1) the prophecy of Isaiah is a patchwork of writings from multiple sources written at various and sundry times when the events were occurring without divine guidance or supernatural intervention; or 2), they were written by Isaiah during his lifetime with the intervention of divine guidance and supernatural inspiration from one who could proclaim the future and who had the power to bring to pass the events that he had said would occur in the future. God surely knew that there would be such unbelievers. Could this have been one of the reasons that In chapters 41-48 he challenged the gods of wood, clay, and metal to a contest remi-

Chapter Thirteen

The Oracle Against Babylon

Vv. 1-5 – The Call to Arms

The heading of chapter 13, "Oracle concerning Babel, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see," indicates that a second major section of the work has been reached. The Hebrew word *Massâh* may be translate either "oracle" or "burden." It really makes no difference. The "oracle" is God's judgment for sin; the "burden" is that which is borne because of sin, a burden that is determined by the judgment of God.

Jehovah issues a call to arms – set up an ensign on the mountain where it can be seen and call and hand signal for the army to gather through the gates of the nobles, either into Babylon or into cities ruled by nobles or princes (2). The urgency of the summons is demonstrated by the three-fold signal. God has called for his consecrated and mighty men to execute his wrath (3). Jehovah's command is quickly executed and the multitudes assemble from the mountain with great noise; the nations gather together. There is no doubt about who is in charge; it is Jehovah's army and it gathers from the uttermost part of heaven and Jehovah will use them as weapons of his indignation to destroy the land (4, 5).

Vv. 6-16 – The Terror of the Day of Jehovah

The command issues to wail and cry because the day of Jehovah is at hand and it will come as destruction from the almighty (6). But how can the destruction of the land occur when the land has not even been

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niscent of the one between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (2 Kings 18:20-40). He risked his glory upon his ability to declare the end from the beginning and the inability of the idols to do the same. For believers the issue was settled long ago. It was settled when Isaiah declared his prophecy to be "the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz." Inspiration confirmed that statement with an "Amen" when Peter declared that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). It makes all of the difference in the world, not to mention the world to come, when your God begins with a capital "G"!

established in Jeremiah's day? There was no Nebuchadnezzar, must less one who could say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty (Dan. 4:30)?" Once again Isaiah uses the prophetic perfect, *i.e.*, he speaks of a future event as if it had already happened. When God has said that it will happen its occurrence cannot fail. It is so absolutely certain that it is described in a manner that declares its certainty. Those who see it will be utterly amazed and stand helplessly by with melting heart and severe pain. Their faces will be flushed and red like fire from having observed mighty Babylon burn to the ground (7-8).

Again the Lord declares the day of Jehovah and describes its fierceness. It will come with cruelty, wrath, and fierce anger to make the land desolate and to destroy the sinners out of it. The stars and the sun will withhold their light and the moon will not shine (9-10). It is a day of judgment and God declares that he will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their iniquity, the proud for their arrogance, and the terrible for their conceitedness. Man will become so rare that he will be as precious as gold, even the pure gold of Ophir (11-12).[101] This language may also refer to the remnant that cannot be redeemed with silver and gold but only by the blood of the Lamb (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

Continuing to describe the day of Jehovah and the fall of Babylon, Isaiah declares that it will involve the trembling of the heavens and the shaking of the earth out of its place. Isaiah wrote this at a time when man did not know that God had created the earth with a "place" and that just the slightest displacement would render the earth uninhabitable by man. Man will flee like the roe flees from the hunter and wander like sheep without a shepherd. Both are objects of pity. Is not man

[101] Place to which Solomon sent a fleet of merchant ships to bring back gold and all sorts of precious and exotic products. The location of Ophir is not certain; most place it in southwest Arabia. There may be a relationship between the place and the man named Ophir, who appears in the table of nations as a son of Joktan (Gn 10:29; cf. 1 Chr 1:23), a descendant of Shem. The names of Joktan and his sons are connected with the southern and western parts of Arabia. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.*

the same without God? He thinks that he is self-sufficient, but in the day of God's visitation he is as helpless and the roe and the sheep. There is nothing left to do but flee, each man for himself (13-14).

Fleeing does not accomplish safety because every person found will be "thrust through" and all captives will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to death before their eyes, their houses plundered, and their wives raped (15-16). God will use the Mede's to accomplish his purpose. They are interested only in revenge and power. But Babylon is a wealthy nation. Can it not buy them off? Can Babylon not pay tribute and save itself? The Mede's have not interest in such. Offer them silver they not even stop to look at it. Offer them gold and they will show no desire to possess it. They will only unleash their bows and show no mercy to man, pregnant women, or children (17-18).

Isaiah now reaches the heart of his message. The final destruction of Babylon is described (19-21). Was this prophecy fulfilled? Not immediately. Cyrus left the walls and the city of Babylon still standing. In 518 B.C. the walls were destroyed. Then Xerxes destroyed the temple of Belus.[102] As Seleucia[103] rose Babylon declined, and in Strabo's time[104] Babylon was a desert that he described as "a great desert is the great

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[102] As the chief temple in the land after Babylon became the capital, and the type of many similar erections, E-sagila, was the temple of **Belus**. According to Herodotus, it was a massive tower within an enclosure measuring 400 yards each way, and provided with gates of brass, or rather bronze. The tower within consisted of a kind of step-pyramid, the stages being seven in number (omitting the lowest, which was the platform forming the foundation of the structure). A winding ascent gave access to the top, where was a chapel or shrine, containing no statue, but regarded by the Babylonians as the abode of the god. Lower down was another shrine, in which was placed a great statue of Zeus (Bel-Merodach) sitting, with a large table before it. Both statue and table are said to have been of gold, as were also the throne and the steps. Outside the sanctuary (on the ramp, apparently) were two altars, one small and made of gold, whereon only unweaned lambs were sacrificed, and the other larger, for full-grown victims.

[103] **SELEUCIA** (S´ luœ¿ shˆï aå) Syrian city on Mediterranean coast, five miles north of the Orontes River and 15 miles from Antioch. Paul stopped there on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4). It was founded by Seleucus Nicator, the first Seleucid king, in 301 B.C.

[104] Strabo was a Greek historian who lived from 64 B.C. to c 23 A.D.

city." Jerusalem will continue because God has declared that it will be the birthplace of the kingdom that cannot be destroyed (2:2-4) but Babylon will be utterly destroyed and fade into history and be forever uninhabited.

Isaiah is trying to teach us that even if it seems like an uneven fight to tackle "Babylon" (the powerful countries and the magnificent cities), it is not. Isaiah knows something about the Holy One of Israel that "Babylon" does not know. He knows that the battle is indeed an uneven fight, but not in the direction that the world thinks. Years later when Isaiah was dead and Babylon was at its height, the God of the captive Jews humbled Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest of the Babylonian kings, by making him eat grass like an ox (Dan. 4:24-25). The words that Nebuchadnezzar spoke at the end of that experience were true then and are true now:

Dan. 4:34 And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation.
Dan. 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?
Dan. 4:36 At the same time mine understanding returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent greatness was added unto me.
Dan. 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

How sad that we, like the ancient Hebrews persist in trusting everything but God. We give our allegiance to physical things and to flesh and blood as if they could give us significance and worth. In reality those things pass faster than we can imagine and faster than we want to believe. Reality is that that in which we trust will soon be gone.

What then will survive? It is not the work of humans amassed by cleverness or oppression. It is not our finest works of art and culture. In the end, while they may survive their creators, they are as fragile as we are. One day the finest cathedrals will fall, as did Solomon's temple and the Mona Lisa will crumble into dust. If we trust our power, someone more powerful than we will emerge; If we trust our intelligence someone smarter than we will emerge; if we trust our creativity, someone more creative than we will emerge; if we trust our allies, they will one day run away before an enemy mightier than we, and they may even become the enemy themselves.

All of this supersedence comes from the fact that we are neither self-originating nor self-authenticating. It is foolish to trust in humanity that has breath in its nostrils (2:22). Rather we should be looking to the eternal that shall not pass away. We may love our country and sorrow over the unmistakable signs of its demise that are all about us. But if we put our hope in its eventual recovery and success, that is vain hope. Yes, God may give us a revival accompanied by more years to come. But the end will come. How foolish it is to trust the veil when we can trust the one behind the veil and who will one day most certainly rend that veil in two.

Chapter Fourteen

A Taunting Song over the Fall of the Tyrant (vv. 1-27);

The Burden of Philistia (vv. 28-32)

Vv. 1-2 – Compassion on Jacob

These verses are generally considered to be part of chapter 13. Babylon's destruction is precedent to Judah's restoration. Jehovah will bring them again to their land. Isaiah speaks here not of the theocracy but of a new people chosen of God to be established in their homeland. It will include both Jews and Gentiles because "the sojourner shall join himself with them and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob." The peoples (plural) will bring the Jews back to their place. Cyrus issued

the decree that released them from captivity and returned them to their land. Darius and Artaxerxes assisted in building the temple (Ezra 6). Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to return and build the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2). The prophecy that the house of Israel would rule over its oppressors was not to be taken literally, but spiritually or figuratively. It was fulfilled as the oppressors were conquered by the Spirit of God. Paul stated it well in 2 Cor. 10:5 when he spoke of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Vv. 3-11 – The Taunting Song Against Babylon

The setting for the taunting song begins with an assurance to Israel that for the Israel of the future there will be a day of rest from sorrow and troubles and from the hard service of captivity. It is then that they are to take up a parable in song against the King of Babylon. It is not a song rejoicing at the misfortune of another, but a song of rejoicing in the work of God. Isaiah is taken beyond his own day to the day that Babylon has fallen, the oppressor and the golden city ceased. There will be no more tribute paid to Babylon. The staff of oppression and the scepter of power are broken. As a result the earth is at rest and breaks forth into song. Sheol is agitated at the prospect of the Babylonian tyrant coming to its realm. Perhaps it is even surprised that one so great should ever fall: "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" In the place where it goes its music is silenced and worms replace its kingly garb. How the mighty have fallen!

Vv. 12-20 – The Fall of the Mighty

The opening verse of this subject has been a source of controversy over the years. Connecting this verse with Luke 10:18, v. 12 was interpreted by some early church fathers as referring to Satan's fall from heaven. The Hebrew word translated "day-star" (Lucifer[105], KJV), derived from a word meaning "to shine," refers to the morning star.

[105] The Hebrew expression was probably never meant to be a name, but has come to be used thus because the verse in which it occurs is applied to Satan. This apparently was done first by two of the church fathers, Tertullian and Origen. However, the popularity of Lucifer as a name for Satan may be attributed to its use in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.*

Some suggest that the event recorded in Isaiah 14:12 may be an example of a story quite commonly known in the time of Isaiah. This old Canaanite story concerned the morning star, who had attempted to rise high above the clouds and establish himself on the mountain where the gods assembled, in the uttermost part of the north. He had desired to take the place of the highest god, becoming ruler of the world. His attempts were thwarted, and he was cast into the underworld. This story of the minor star deity aspiring to ascend above the throne of the most high god served, in the purposes of Isaiah, as an excellent analogy to the pride and aspirations of the king of Babylon, the person with whom chapters 13 and 14 are concerned. Isaiah states (14:3, 4) that Yahweh, the God of Israel, would give the people relief from the tyranny of their oppressors, and they would take up a taunt song against the king. Although he had sought to be great, he would be brought low; he who sought to be a god would, with his descendants, cease to exist on the earth. Though the Hebrews had no myths, illustrations from familiar gentile mythology often were used to express spiritual truth.

There are many who believe the expression (and surrounding context) refers to Satan. They believe the similarities between Isaiah 14:12, Luke 10:18, and Revelation 12:7–10 warrant this conclusion. However, although the NT passages do speak of Satan's fall, the context of the Isaiah passage describes the defeated king of Babylon. The Babylonian king had desired to be above God, and so fell from heaven. His doom is pictured as already accomplished. Though defeat is certain for Satan, he yet continues his evil acts against God's people. Isaiah, then, is not speaking of Satan in 14:12 but of the proud, and soon to be humiliated, king of Babylon. Some think that the last half of the verse changes his figure of speech from the morning star to a tree. That may be, in which case he is saying that the one who had felled nations would himself be felled in their midst like a great tree. On the other hand, Isaiah may be continuing his figure of speech by saying that Babylon is a brilliant star whose glory is cut down by a fall from the height of heaven.
Vv. 13ff. seem to confirm the reference to Babylon. The boast attributed to him is clearly an assertion that he is greater than God. While there is no record of these exact words coming from the mouth of a Babylonian king, Isaiah is proclaiming that which he "said in his heart"

(v. 13). His heart can be determined from his words and his actions (vv. 14-20). The result is that described in verse 12 – he will be brought down, even to Sheol, the uttermost parts of the pit (15).

Vv. 21-27 – It Is the Vengeance of Jehovah

The time has come. The order is given to prepare slaughter for his children because of their fathers' sins so that there are no descendants to rise up and behave as their fathers. Jehovah will rise up against them and destroy name and remnant (not God's remnant), and all generations. It will be a habitation for porcupines and pools of water, having been swept with the besom ("broom" ESV) of destruction (21-23). When a nation reaches the point of such corruption and wickedness that it is unfit to continue, God brings it to an end. It was as true of John's Babylon (Rev. 19:20) as it was of ancient Babylon, and so shall it ever be.

Much has been said about Babylon, but Assyria is the dominant world power when Isaiah was writing. For Babylon to arise Assyria had to be taken down. Jehovah here announces that that shall indeed happen. Indeed, Jehovah has sworn that he will bring to pass his purpose and that it shall stand. To accomplish that purpose he will break the Assyrian in his land and upon his mountains and tread him under foot. The result will be that that the burden of the Assyrian yoke will depart from Israel's shoulder (24-25). As at the beginning of these verses God assured its certainty, so he does again at its conclusion. Assyria may feel that it is the master of its own fate, but God reminds that what is happening is happening according to his purpose and no power can annul it. His hand was stretched out and no one could turn it back (26-27). As Omar Khayyâm wrote in *Rubáiyát*:

The Moving Finger writes: and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

Man would do well to learn the truth of Proverbs 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; But the counsel of Jehovah, that shall stand."

Vv. 28-32 – The Oracle Against Philistia

The Philistians were around long before Israel came to the Promised Land. They were there when Abraham arrived (Gen. 21:32, 34), and remained with Isaac (Gen. 26) and Moses (Ex. 13:17). They were there when Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, and Israel constantly fought with the Philistines during its existence. David finally subdued them. With Arabian allies they later came up against Jehoram and carried off much plunder. Uzziah conquered several Philistine cities and destroyed their walls (2 Chron. 26:6-7). It was Edomite and Philistine victories that led Ahaz to seek security from Tiglath-pileser (Assyria) (2 Chron. 28:16-21). Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria. Having favor with Jehovah, Hezekiah defeated the Philistines. The philistines were still under the judgment of God in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 25:15-17, 20). Jeremiah declared that the end result would be Philistia's complete destruction (Jer. 47). Zephaniah declared that there would be no inhabitant (Zeph. 2:5). As late as Zechariah God said that he would cut off the pride of the Philistines (Zech. 9:6).

This oracle of God was declared in the year that Ahaz died (715 B.C.).[106] The Philistines had rejoiced because the rod that had subdued them had been broken. God told them that their rejoicing was premature because "out of the serpent's root shall come forth an adder, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." What this means is not clear. Delitsch argues that it refers to the house of David, that David and Solomon ruled over Philistia, that when, following Solomon, Israel was divided, Philistia rejoiced. He concludes that the rejoicing was premature because out of the root of David would come a serpent whom he identifies as Hezekiah. Following Hezekiah would come the Messiah who would pronounce final judgment upon Philistia. This position seems to be no more than trying to connect a series of historical facts in a manner to fulfill prophecy. The approach is similar to the historical interpretation of the Book of Revelation, and, like the historical approach to Revelation, is not persuasive.

[106] There is no indication of whether it was declared before or after Ahaz's death.

Rawlinson[107] has a more reasonable understanding supported by Assyrian texts: "The Philistines had suffered grievously at the hands of Judah in the reign of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6), and had retaliated in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:18). It would seem that after this they were invaded by Tiglath-Pileser, who penetrated as far as Gaza, which he took ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 51), as he also did Ascalon ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 399). Tiglath-Pileser died shortly before Ahaz, and the present "burden" seems to have been uttered in connection with his death. Isaiah warns Philistia (equivalent to "Palestina") that her rejoicing is premature; Tiglath-Pileser will have successors as powerful and as cruel as himself, and these successors will carry destruction and ravage over the whole land." However, this explanation is not without difficulty. As noted above, as late as Jeremiah God, referring to Babylon, said that Philistia would drink of the cup of Jehovah's wrath. Still later, after the return from Babylonian captivity, Zechariah said that the pride of Philistia was still to be cut off.

So what does it mean? Based on the above, Hailey concludes that the Assyrians were the rod that was broken, the Babylonians were the adder, and a third unnamed power is the flying serpent that will deliver the final blow. Were I an original commentator I might be forced to confess, "I don't know."

The poor and needy will be spared (the attack will come while they are being fed and sleeping safely), the root and remnant of the Philistines will be destroyed. Every city is to howl and cry; not one shall be spared. They are melted away. The smoke out of the north is understood to be the smoke of the invaders campfires or the smoke from burning cities and the invaders approach or just a symbol of fiery destruction. Whatever the meaning, it does not declare the utter destruction of Philistia. That will be left for the fiery serpent.

Comments on God's Swearing

God's nature is such that he cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 2:18) so what does his swearing add to either his promise or his prophecy? As the

[107] Rawlinson, George, *Isaiah*, *Pulpit Commentary*.

Psalmist wrote, "He keepeth his promise forever (Psa. 146:6). Perhaps God is simply accommodating his creature because he knows that we have a propensity to distrust one another. After all, who is there among men who has not failed to fulfill a promise or who has not been disappointed by a promise's not being kept? Could it be that God sometimes, but not often, confirms his promise with an oath to give us greater certainty and to provide us greater comfort? A survey of his oaths seems to support that conclusion. After the flood God covenanted with Noah as the representative of all future mankind that he would never again destroy the earth by flood (Gen. 9:11) and Isaiah tells us that he did so with an oath (Isa. 54:9). He swore to Abraham that he would give him the land of Canaan (Gen. 24:7). He promised David in a covenant confirmed with an oath that he would establish his seed forever and build up his throne to all generations (Psa. 89:3-4). He swore to his own son that would be a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4).[108] In v. 24 God swore that the yoke of the Assyrians would be broken and removed. It is a beautiful thought that God's eye is on the sparrow, but how much greater is the thought that God never takes his eye off of his remnant. How comforting it is that he knows our frame and remembers that we are dust (Psa. 103:14). Is it not true that we often condescend (in the right sense of the word) to

[108] Does this not argue against our hypothesis that God's oaths are for the certainty and comfort of his creatures? Christ does not fall into that category because he is not created save in his being made in the likeness of man and being found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2:6-8). His eternal nature is that he exists in the form of God. Not only does scripture not tell us why God made this oath to Christ, it does not tell us when. It does tell us that on the Mount of Transfiguration God sent Moses and Elijah to speak with Christ about his decease that he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Could it be that this was the occasion that God made such an oath to comfort Jesus' earthly nature as he was prepared for the moment that he would be forsaken by both man and God; to assure him that "thy will be done" was the right path to walk (Matt. 26:42); to confirm to him as a man that his flesh would not see corruption (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31). It is difficult to deny that the human side of Jesus needed comfort and assurance in light of his plaintive cry, My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me Matt. 27:46)?" Of course, it could be that the oath was not for Christ at all, but was for us. When we read his inspired record of these events his oath assures us Christ was indeed only the first fruits of them that sleep and that there shall be a resurrection for us (1 Cor. 15:2-24).

speak with our little children to encourage and comfort them? Surely God by his oaths is doing the same. "Like as a father pitieth his children, So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him (Psa. 103:13). 17 Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: 19 which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil. . . . (Heb. 6:16-19)"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Burden of Moab (1)

Vv. 1-4 – Crying, Weeping, and Trembling over Desolation

The Moabites were descendants of Lot by his first-born daughter (Gen. 19:37). The handout for this lesson shows where Moab was located in relation to Judah and Israel. Chapters 15 and 16 name 23 locations; only some 10 can be identified today. Only Babylon and Egypt receive more attention from Isaiah than that which he gives to Moab. Through Terah Moab and Israel had a common ancestor. Despite that kinship Moab and Israel were bitter enemies. David had great contempt for Moab, describing it as his "washpot" (Psa. 60:8). The language that Isaiah uses to describe the judgment against Moab is striking. The Moabites will weep, wail, grieve, they will cry out. Even their armed men will cry out with his soul trembling within him. It is so stark that Isaiah's heart cries out for Moab while her nobles flee (1-5). This map locates Moab after the Northern Kingdom's fall.

Vv. 5-9 – The Prophet's Lament

Isaiah's lament for Moab arises from the destruction that he sees coming. More of the effects of that judgment are outlined. Nimrim, which flows into the Jordan above the Dead Sea at the northern limit of Moab, will be desolate, the grass withered leaving no green thing (6). In desperation they will flee seeking to save their possessions by carrying

them across the brook of the willows[109] (7). The Moabites will seek refuge in Edom to which their cry has reached, even unto Eglaim and Beer-elim.[110] Give the status of the River Dimon, its waters are full of blood, it is not surprising that the crying goes up. But there is more – God will bring further catastrophe (a lion) upon even the remnant of the land that escapes. The end will be total destruction.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Burden of Moab (2)

Vv. 1-5 – Moab's Hope

These verses are difficult.[111] One commentator lists six possible interpretations. Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking? Perhaps it is not clear because it makes no big difference. Whoever is speaking to whom the message is that Moab, in its distressed condition, can find hope only in Judah. The tribute is to come from Selah (Semitic for Petra, "rock" or "cliff"), the capital of Edom, through the wilderness to the mount of the daughter of Zion (1). There is no explanation of why the Moabites would send tribute from the Edomite capital. Perhaps the Moabites with their flocks had taken refuge there. Perhaps it relates to a rocky section of Moab to which they had fled. Wherever the origin, the tribute was to flow through the Edomite wilderness to Jerusalem (2 Kings 3:4-8).

The daughter of Moab would be in a confused state, compared to birds that have been flushed from their nests. They flitter about at the fords of the Arnon which are near the land of Judah (2).

Verse 3 calls for the giving of counsel and the execution of justice, but does not designate by whom the counsel is to be given or by whom jus-

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[109] A reference to the Zered River that marked the border between Moab and Edom.

[110] The location of both these cities is uncertain. The best "guess" is on the eastern boundary with Edom.

[111] Much of the difficulty arises from the fact that the time of this prophecy is unknown.

tice is to be administered. Some suggest it is an appeal by Moab begging Judah for asylum. Others think that it is Isaiah beseeching Moab to accept fugitives from Judah so that Moab may receive reciprocal treatment in the future. Still others think that Isaiah is advising Moab on how to bring and present its tribute to Judah. Moab is to ask for counsel and justice, for protection (shade) for refugees, provide complete cover, as night in the midst of noonday. Moab is to implore Judah to provide protection and accept the risk of hiding its former enemies.

Verse 4 presents similar difficulties. Is it Moab or Judah that is being addressed? If Judah is addresses the outcasts are Moabites. If Moab is being addressed, the outcasts are Israelites. You may take your pick and find a commentator that will support your conclusion. If we are correct on verse three, Isaiah is advising Moab to make a plea to Judah so that God would show them mercy. Judah would be in position to offer refuge because the extortioner is brought to naught, destruction has ceased, and the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

Refuge is offered. It is offered in the form of a Messianic prophecy that provides that refuge from all enemies will be provided in Zion under the Messianic David (see Amos 9:11-12) who will establish a throne in loving-kindness, judging, and seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness (5).

Vv. 6-12 – Moab's Rejection of This Hope

Why did Moab not seek and accept Jehovah's offer of refuge? Could it be "the pride of Moab" (6)? Moab is a braggart but its braggadocio will be brought to naught. What Moab can and will do is wail and mourn for the raisin-cakes[112] of Kir-hareseth.[113] (See Jeremiah's comments on

[112] "As this was the principal fortress of Moab, and according to Isa. 15:1 it had already been destroyed, *}ashisheœ* appears to mean the "strong foundations,"—namely, as laid bare; in other words, the "ruins" (cf., Jer. 50:15, and *moœs§deœ* in Isa. 58:12). But in every other passage in which the word occurs it signifies a kind of cake; and as the devastation of the vines of Moab is made the subject of mourning afterwards, it has the same meaning here as in Hos. 3:1, namely *raisin-cakes,* or raisins pressed into the form of cakes. Such cakes as these may have been a special article of the export trade of Kir. Jeremiah has altered *}a∑shisheœ* into *}ansheœ* (Jer.

Moab's arrogance, Jer. 48:7, 11, 14, 42). How many of our politicians today invoke God's name and ask for his blessing while arrogantly ignoring his will and wisdom?

Vv. 8-10 describe the price that Moab will pay for its pride. It is so devastating that it leads Isaiah to weep for Moab (9). "Wherefore" (11) introduces the conclusion of the devastation. Isaiah's weeping continues; his heart sounds like a harp and his inward parts (sound) for Kir-heres. The Moabites will present themselves in the high places, the sanctuaries of their gods. They will pray until they are weary, but they will not prevail (12).

Vv. 13-14 – The Fixed Time of the Visitation

At least three suggestions have been expounded for when this prophecy was made. Some refer it to prophecies earlier made by Moses (Num. 21:27-30; 24:17) and by Amos (Amos 2:1-3). Others attribute the prior prophecy to an unidentified prophet and Isaiah now repeats that prophecy. It is more likely that the prophecy was made earlier in Isaiah's ministry and he now proceeds to proclaim that its fulfillment is nigh. The time is certain since the description of the time, within three years, is the normal time of the years of a hireling. The worker wants no more; the hirer wants no less. Some construe this to mean exactly three years. Some construe it to mean not over three years. No one construes it to be more than three years. Since the time of the prophecy is unknown it is not possible to tell whether it was fulfilled under Shalmaneser, Sargon, or Sennacherib. All that would be left is a remnant so small that it would be of no account. Jeremiah (48:45-47)

48:31), and thus made *men* out of the grapes." Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*

[113] **Kir-Hareseth; Kir-Heres** ku®r-har¿eœ†-seth, -ha-reœ¿seth (tRc®rSj-ryîq, Isa 16:7; in 2 Ki 3:25 AV reads Kir-haraseth [pausal form]); (cRrRj ryîq, Jer 48:31,36; in Isa 16:11 AV reads **Kir-haresh** [pausal form]): Modern scholars unanimously identify this city with Kir of Moab. In Jehoram's invasion of Moab it alone withstood his attack; and on the city wall the king of Moab sacrificed his son (2 Ki 3:25 ff). It was obviously the capital, i.e. Kir Moab. The name is generally taken to mean "city of the sun." *The International Standard Encyclopedia*.

writes that such a remnant did survive and remained until Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, after which Moab would be as Sodom (Zeph. 2:9).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Burden of Damascus

Vv. 1-3 – The Judgment Against Damascus

Damascus is an ancient city, some say the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. Its origin is unknown, but it existed in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:15; 15:2). Damascus was about 135 miles northeast of Jerusalem near the Abana and Pharpar rivers (Remember Naaman, 2 Kings 5:12.). It was the Syria's capital until about 300 B.C. Conflict between Syria and Israel increased during the reign of Omri and Ahab. Conflict between Damascus and Assyria eventually led to Damascus' downfall. Isaiah's prophecy against Damascus includes Ephraim because of the Syriac-Ephraimitic uprising (ch. 7). Since Ephraim joined a heathen power against God's people it would share the same judgment. Additional prophecies against Damascus are found in Amos 1:3-5, Jer. 49:23-27, and Zech. 9:1.

Isaiah begins by announcing that Damascus will lose and never recover the importance that she had enjoyed. In contrast it would be a ruinous heap. This language does not refer to the destruction of all of its buildings, though some of them certainly were. Rather it refers to its glory that shall lie in waste. The cities of Aroer[114] will be deserted by all and be fit only for sheep to graze. The sheep can lie down in peace because there will be no one to make them afraid.

[114] Three cities bear this name in scripture ([1] 1 Sam. 30:28; [2] Josh. 13:25, Judg. 11:26; [3] mentioned often in scripture). Since Jeremiah mentions Aroer in his prophecy against Moab (Jer. 48:19), it is likely that this is the city that Isaiah had in mind in his prophecy. Syria took Aroer under King Hazel, and it became Syria's southwest extremity (2 Kings 10:32-33). Based on Jeremiah's prophecy it appears that Moab had regained it.

Both Ephraim and Damascus will be destroyed; Ephraim will lose its fortress and Damascus will lose its kingdom. Their plot to ruin others led to their own ruin. It came to pass under Tigleth-pileser.

Vv. 4-11 – The Leanness of Jacob

Syria fell in 732 B.C. Israel followed in 722 B.C. With its fall the glory of Jacob wastes away and the fat of his flesh grows thin (1). Since Syria had not yet fallen at the time of this prophecy, it occurred prior to 732 B.C. Verse 2 illustrates the fall by comparing it to reaping heads of grain. The result is little grain is left. The valley of Rephaim is named as the place of gleaning. Thus it is likely a place where Isaiah's hearers had seen such harvesting on numerous occasions (5). Again, it will be like the harvesting of an olive tree leaving only a few olives in the top and hard to reach places of the tree (6).

In that day, the day of waste and the leaving of little, the remnant, small though it may be, will look to God rather than to the made by their hands (7-8). Also in that day their strong cities will be forsaken and desolate (9).

The reason for the desolation is that they forgot the God of their salvation and had not been mindful of the rock of their strength. They had planted pleasant vines (their idols) and tended them well, but they had turned out to be "strange slips" (10-11, "vine slips of a strange god," margin, ASV).

Vv. 12-14 – The Destruction of the Invader

Isaiah now turns attention to the nation that God used for punishing Syria and Ephraim – Assyria. Assyria has already been described as a river overflowing Judah (8:5-8) and as the rod of God's anger against Israel and Judah (10:5-27). His present description is just as vivid. Assyria will come like the roaring of the seas. It seems to be more than just a tidal wave. It will be a tsunami. But the destroyer shall itself be destroyed. Jehovah will rebuke them and cause them to flee like chaff blown by a mountain wind and like dust before the storm. Assyria will come as a terror but the next day it will not exist. This is a vivid description of the destruction of Sennacherib's army outside the gates of

Jerusalem. This chapter closes with great assurance, "This is the portion of them that despoil us, and the lot of them that rob us." God cares for and takes care of his people to accomplish his purpose. What shall we say of those who, today, seek to overthrow the work of God. Need we worry about God's being defeated by humanism, Communism, secularism, Zionism or any or all of the other "Gogs" and "Magogs" that seek to overthrow him? Not at all. Our only worry should be whether he will have brave soldiers who will march onward.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN[115]

Ethiopia

Vv. 1-3 – The Ambassadors and the Prophet's Word to Them

[115] The following comment concerns chapters 18-20. It is from Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. It gives a good basis to understand these chapters. "The three prophecies in Isa. 18, 19 and 20 really form a trilogy. The first (Isa. 18), which, like Isa. 1, the introduction to the whole, is without any special heading, treats in language of the sublimest pathos of *Ethiopia.* The second (Isa. 19) treats in a calmer and more descriptive tone of *Egypt.* The third (Isa. 20) treats of both *Egypt* and *Ethiopia* in the style of historic prose. The kingdom to which all three prophecies refer is one and the same, viz., the Egypto-Ethiopian kingdom; but whilst Isa. 18 refers to the ruling nation, Isa. 19 treats of the conquered one, and Isa. 20 embraces both together. The reason why such particular attention is given to Egypt in the prophecy, is that no nation on earth was so mixed up with the history of the kingdom of God, from the patriarchal times downwards, as Egypt was. And because Israel, as the law plainly enjoined upon it, was never to forget that it had been sheltered for a long time in Egypt, and there had grown into a great nation, and had received many benefits; whenever prophecy has to speak concerning Egypt, it is quite as earnest in its promises as it is in its threats. And thus the *massa* of Isaiah falls into two distinct halves, viz., a threatening one (vv. 1–15), and a promising one (vv. 18–25); whilst between the judgment and the salvation (in vv. 16 and 17) there stands the alarm, forming as it were a connecting bridge between the two. And just in proportion as the coil of punishments is unfolded on the one hand by the prophet, the promise is also unfolded in just as many stages on the other; and moving on in ever new grooves, rises at length to such a height, that it breaks not only through the limits of contemporaneous history, but even through those of the Old Testament itself, and speaks in the spiritual language of the world-embracing love of the New Testament.

Ancient Ethiopia (the land of Cush), lay south of Egypt. It had a large desert; its lifeline was a strip along the Nile River. It is often associated with Egypt (see, *e.g.*, Ch. 20 and 2 Chron. 14:9-15. Isaiah mentions Tirhaka, king of Ethiopia, and his attempt to check Sennacherib in Judah (37:9). The probable date of the events of this chapter is the period of the Assyrian threat to Judah (720-702 B.C.) Chapter 18 is the most difficult chapter thus far. From whence came the ambassadors and to whom were they sent. What is the significance of their being tall and smooth, and of their sending or bringing a present to Jehovah? Commentators give numerous answers to these questions.

Isaiah's introductory word, "Ah," is either an expression of anguish or it may be describing the great distance of the country of which he is about to speak. In either case, the land in question is a land of rustling wings or, the marginal reading, or "shadowing of wings" (ASV). The Hebrew word is translated "locust" in Deut. 28.42. In effect, it is a land of insects, though it is not stated whether they were flies, locusts, or any of other numerous possibilities. Young suggests that it may have been the tsetse fly that was associated with Ethiopia. His purpose, however, does not seem to be so much to assert that the land was filled with some insect as it was to speak of the land as one of swarming hoards of people. This land has armies equipped for foraging and conquering. They move like insects with wings over lands that they would destroy. Hailey identifies the rivers as the White and Blue Niles with their tributaries.[116] Isaiah does not name the nation that sends the ambassadors or to whom they are sent. The ambassadors travel in vessels of papyrus, which indicates that the "sea" is likely a river since papyrus vessels, which were in fact used, were fit only for rivers or lakes, but were not seaworthy. The ambassadors were sent from Ethiopia to

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[116] **NILE —** dark; blue, not found in Scripture, but frequently referred to in the Old Testament under the name of Sihor, i.e., "the black stream" (Isa. 23:3; Jer. 2:18) or simply "the river" (Gen. 41:1; Ex. 1:22, etc.) and the "flood of Egypt" (Amos 8:8). It consists of two rivers, the White Nile, which takes its rise in the Victoria Nyanza, and the Blue Nile, which rises in the Abyssinian Mountains. These unite at the town of Khartoum, whence it pursues its course for 1,800 miles, and falls into the Mediterranean through its two branches, into which it is divided a few miles north of Cairo, the Rosetta and the Damietta branch.[116]

"a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning ownward, a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide." Their destination has been surmised to be Judah[117] or Ethiopian villages.[118]

Note that "saying" in verse 2 is an interpolation without which it is not clear who is speaking. Its presence says that the ambassadors or speaking. But could it be that Isaiah is speaking to the ambassadors instructing them to return to their home and be quiet because God will take care of things. 2 Kings 19:9 lends some credence to this position. Ethiopia certainly was a tall and smooth people. They had success in war with Egypt from 1000 B.C. to 663 B.C.. Ethiopia's history has certainly included times of "meting out and treading down" as well as periods of being meted out and trodden down. It was the former state in Ethiopia's history when Isaiah was prophesying. It was also a country whose land was divided by the rivers (margin, ASV, "have despoiled").

In v. 3 Isaiah calls for the world to note a coming event. In metaphorical language he describes a banner being lifted upon the hills of Zion accompanied by the sound of a trumpet announcing judgment. This introduces the word of Jehovah that follows.

vv. 4-6 – Jehovah is in Control

On his throne from whence he controls the universe God will behold that which transpires. His time of beholding may seem as indifference, but before the Assyrians have garnered their harvest Jehovah will destroy the threatening enemy. The destruction will be so complete that the birds and beasts will feast upon the dead summer and winter. The Assyrian had boasted of his greatness (10:8-11), but not

[117] The supposed purpose of visiting Judah would supposedly have been to incite resistance and revolt against Assyria or to stir up Judah is some way against a common enemy. Barnes supposes just the opposite – the ambassadors were "to the people of Nubia or Ethiopia forming an alliance with the Assyrians for the purpose of invading Judea."

[118] The purpose of sending ambassadors from the king of Ethiopia to Ethiopian villages would have been to stir up his people against an invasion by the Assyrians.

even the greatest power on earth is a match for Jehovah. It is Jehovah and not Assyria who will determine the outcome.

V. 7 – Ethiopia's Homage to the Lord

The ambassadors return and report the great victory (37:36-37; see Zeph. 3:10), as a result of which the "people tall and smooth" send a present to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, Mount Zion. There is no record of Tirhakah's sending a present to Mount Zion, but that is not to say that it did not happen. When the Lord had destroyed and scattered David's enemies, David wrote, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God" (Psa. 68:31).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

An Oracle Concerning Egypt

Vv. 1-17 – Threats

Egypt has a long and storied history. The Bible student is interested in only a part of that history, some 2,000 years from Abraham's sojourn in that land (Gen. 12:10-13:1) to the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). During that period God's people were greatly influenced by Egypt's religion, culture, and economy. Chapter 19 falls into two distinct divisions: threats (vv. 1-17) and promises (vv. 18-25). Through most of its history Egypt had been an oppressor of God's people. However, the chapter closes with a promise of blessing and hope for both Egypt and Assyria (v. 25). For additional prophecies concerning Egypt see Jer. 46; Ezek. 29-32; Joel 3:19.

[Vv. 1-4 – Internal discord: The failure of idolatry]

The use of Oracle" and "burden" has already been discussed (Chapter 13). God comes to judge Egypt striking fear into the hearts of the Egyptians and their false gods. Egypt shall be divided by internal strife from neighbor to neighbor to kingdom to kingdom. Its spirit will fail; its counsel destroyed; their only recourse will be to the necromancers.

Egypt will be defeated and given over to a cruel lord and fierce king. It is not clear whether Isaiah is here speaking of one king or using the term to include all kings who defeated Egypt during this period. The Assyrians defeated Egpt several times and then, under Ashurbanipal, sacked Thebes (the Noamon of Nahum 3:8) in 663 B.C. Later, as Jeremiah prophesied (Jer. 43:10-13; 46:13-26), Nebuchadnezzar brought down the land of Egypt. Cambyses led a Persian army against Egypt and brought it under his rule. When Egypt revolted against Persia the wrath of Xerxes 1 fell on them. Alexander the Great was looked upon as a deliverer when he freed Egypt from Medo-Persian tyranny. By New Testament times Egypt was under the rule of Rome.

[Vv. 5-10 – Natural and economic disaster]

Nothing was more important to the Egyptian economy than the Nile and its tributaries, here referred to as the "sea." It will fail and the river will become dry (5). All drivers will be foul, diminished, and dried up. The wetlands and the grassy fields, necessary to the production of food, will wither away (6-7). The fishers of the Nile cannot save the economy. They can only lament and languish because they have no catch by either angle (hook) or net (8). Egypt was noted for its garments of flax and cotton but they are no more (9). All classes from the highest (the foundations thereof) to the lowest (all that work for hire) will be grieved in soul.

[Vv. 11-15 – Foolish counsel]

Isaiah returns to the discussion of v. 3 – foolish counsel. Zoan was located in the northeast section of the Delta near the border. Between 1080 and 715 B.C. it was a capital of the pharaohs. During the period of 715 – 644 B.C., it was used occasionally by the Nubian rulers as a royal residence. Egypt, once known for its wisdom (Acts 7:22), had princes of Zoan who were foolish; the wisest counselors were brutish.[119] They cannot claim to be wise or the sons of wise men because their counsel will betray them. The "wise men" are challenged to come forward and to hear that which Jehovah has purposed concerning Egypt. But that

[119] They were without reason, irrational, stupid.

will not happen because the princes of Zoan have become fools and the princes of Memphis are deceived. In their foolish and duped condition they have led Egypt astray. The cornerstone of the people have led their people to destruction (11-13).

The God who is in control has determined this sad condition in which the people go astray in every work much like one who is vomiting drunk. The result is that no work will be accomplished by the leaders or the workers. They shall all tremble with fear because Jehovah is shaking his hand over them. Even Judah, a small part of the people who were once Egypt's slaves, shall make them afraid. It shall not be accomplished their own. It is because of what Jehovah of hosts purposes against Egypt. It is Judah's God who makes them tremble.

Vv. 18-25 – Promises

[v. 18 – The transition from threats to promises]

"In that day" ties the time to the day when the prophecies of judgment will be fulfilled. Days of blessing follow days of judgment. Some hold that the "five cities" are literal cities; however, they cannot agree either on the identity of the five cities or the time that is in view. It seems to be better to understand "five" to represent a small number. The meaning of "speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Jehovah of hosts" is a major difficulty. Most commentators think the language is Hebrew. They then look for Jewish leaders who, after the time of Isaiah, could have introduced the worship of Jehovah to Egyptian cities. Others see the phrase as a reference to the time of spiritual unity under the Messiah. However, there is no Biblical support for the proposition that "the language of Canaan" ever was used to signify the language of national or spiritual Israel.

It is more reasonable that the phrase is a reference to "the merchant people" (see, Isa. 23:11, margin, ASV).[120] These traffickers were laden with silver and were to be cut off (Zephaniah 1:11, see margin). Zechariah 14:21 may give the reason when, in the day of Jehovah's reign un-

[120] See also, Hosea 12:7, "He is a trafficker"; Ezek. 7:4, "a land of traffic," margin, ASV, "the land of Canaan".

der the Messiah "there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts.

The next phrase that describes one of the five cities and "the city of destruction" is just as difficult. Some commentators just surrender and conclude that there is no satisfactory explanation. If that is in fact the case it is worth looking at the text closely to determine if there is a possible variant that makes sense. One possibility is that by a slight change of one consonant the word could be translated "City of the Sun." This could refer to Heliopolis, the center of the worship of the sun god, Ra, and the passage then would be predicting its destruction. Jeremiah 43:13 offers some support for this understanding. Speaking of the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, whom God calls "my servant" (v. 10), Jeremiah writes: "He shall also break the pillars of Beth-shemesh (margin ASV, "the house of the sun Probably Heliopolis, that is, On"), that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of Egypt shall he burn with fire." If this is correct, then Isaiah seems to be saying in v. 18 that amid idolatry and confusion there will be some who swear to Jehovah while they continue to speak the mixed language of error and truth – the language of Canaan – until the pure spiritual language of Jehovah comes. As they do so, the center of Egyptian idolatry will be destroyed.

[Vv. 19-22 – Jehovah to be known to Egypt]

As in v. 18, "in that day" refers to the period being discussed in this chapter. The worship of Jehovah will be established in the midst of Egyptian idolatry. "Altar" obviously includes sacrifices; however, the term may be used either literally or figuratively (Heb. 13:10). The first recorded altar erected in scripture was that of Noah (Gen. 8:20).[121] The patriarchs erected various altars. Moses erected altars outside of Palestine. Once the promised land was entered, the Israelites were to offer sacrifices only in the place where Jehovah recorded his name. Only there were altars to be erected (Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5, 11, 14). Those

[121] This is not to say that Noah's altar was the first altar ever erected. Abel's offering may well have been upon an altar, but there is no Biblical record of his having erected an altar.

who offered sacrifices elsewhere were to be cut off (Lev. 17:8-9). Given these facts, it does not seem possible that a literal altar is under consideration in this passage.

To what then does the passage refer? If the passage refers to a literal conversion of Egypt and Assyria (vv. 22-25) when was it fulfilled? Some seek to find fulfillment in early centers such as Alexandria and the Coptic Church that has continued through the centuries. New Testament Christianity certainly existed in Egypt.[122] It probably began

[122] Although no mention is made of the beginnings of **Egyptian Christianity** in the NT, other material and literary evidence suggests that Christianity started there early and became well established. The most important city for the rise of Christianity in Egypt was Alexandria.

Egyptian Jews who heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:10) were probably the first to introduce Christianity to Alexandria. Eusebius passes on a tradition, obtained by hearsay, purporting that Mark was the first to found churches in Alexandria and that he remained and functioned in a leadership capacity until the eighth year of Nero (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 2.16; 2.24.1). Most scholars discount the viability of this tradition because of the better attested accounts of Mark accompanying Peter as his interpreter and composing his Gospel in Rome (Papias *Frag.* 3.15; Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39; Metzger, 100; *see DJG*, Mark).

Alexandria was a natural place for the spread of the gospel to the rest of Egypt and to the (north) African continent. The city was a key commercial center, possessing the busiest port in the empire. Strabo, who spent five years in the city working on his *Geography,* remarked that Alexandria is "the greatest emporium of the inhabited world" (Strabo*Geog.* 17.1.13). With a population of up to a half-million people, Alexandria was the second largest city of the Roman world. Among this population was the largest Jewish settlement in the diaspora.

It is doubtful that Apollos provides us with insight into the early Christian community in Alexandria (Acts 18:24–28) in spite of the testimony of the Western text that he had been instructed in the way of the Lord "in his native place [*en teœ patridi*]." Apollos was only familiar with the OT and the baptism of John, not the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can only speculate as to where he came into contact with the John-the-Baptist tradition.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is the oldest Christian document from Alexandria that we possess. This document was written after some monumental events in the Alexandrian Jewish community: a horrific massacre of Jews under Tiberius Julius Alexander in A.D. 66, the reverberations from the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 and the decimation of the Jewish community in Alexandria after they revolted during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 115–17; *see* Judaism, Post-A.D. 70).

with the conversion of Alexandrian Jews. Thus, there are two possibilities: 1) there was a turning to God by the Egyptians and Assyrians in the days of Old Testament sacrifices; and 2) The Egyptians and Assyrians were included among the nations that would flow unto Zion. As for the first, there is no historical record of such turning. While it is true that nations heard of God's deliverance of his people from Egypt and trembled as a result (Josh. 2:8-11), there is no indication that such trembling led to conversion. The second possibility seems more reasonable if Isaiah himself is permitted to comment. Isaiah had already spoken of a time when all nations would flow unto God's mountain

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The content of *Barnabas* reflects some significant similarities to Stephen's speech as recorded in Acts 7. In both, there is an emphasis on the demise of the temple cult, an appeal to the golden-calf episode of the exodus, and a similar christology, including the use of the title, "the Righteous One." B. Pearson suggests that, "this type of Christianity was introduced to Alexandria soon after the death of Stephen and the scattering of the 'Hellenists' from Jerusalem" (Pearson 1986, 213). Since Alexandrian Jews already tended toward a spiritual interpretation of the temple and its observances, the ground was well prepared for the reception of Christianity along the lines expressed by Stephen (*see* Hellenists).

Perhaps some of the most significant discoveries illustrating the spread of Christianity into various parts of Egypt have been the fragments of NT and LXX biblical texts on papyri. The earliest of these, the John Rylands fragment of the Gospel of John (P52), dates to the first half of the second century. Another fragment of the Gospel of John dating to the second century was published in 1983 and has been designated (P90). Further analysis of P64 has recently led C. Thiede to suggest a late first-century date (in *ZPE* 105 [1994] 13–20), though this is debated. A fragment from an unknown Gospel (Egerton Pap. 2) dates to the middle of the second century. We could also add to this a number of early fragments of the Greek OT that have been found scattered throughout Egypt which show signs of being Christian copies. Metzger observes that for every papyrus fragment discovered in Egypt, scores have perished or still lie hidden in the sand (Metzger, 101–3). All this points to a thriving Christianity in Egypt that has radiated from its origin in Alexandria to various parts of the hinterland.

At a very early date, it appears that forms of Christianity began to emerge that deviated significantly from the apostolic brand of Christianity represented in the NT documents. From the second century on, Alexandria became a noted center for Gnosticism through a variety of famous teachers such as Basilides and Valentinus. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi documents in the late 1940s has given us a much better understanding of the varieties of Gnosis present in the city at a very early stage.

(2:2-4). He has said that the Root of Jesse would be an ensign to the peoples and the nations will seek him (11:10). Jehovah says that he "will give [the Servant] for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles," to bring them out of the darkness (42:6), and that he would "also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation" (49:6). Of the redeemed nations Jehovah said, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (56:7; cf. Mark 11:17). This fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah has further support in the remaining verses.

[Vv. 23-25 – Universal worship of Jehovah]

There will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. It will no longer be used for war but to enable common worship. Isaiah has already used this metaphor to describe the return from Assyria (11:16). It is this highway that is the way of holiness for the redeemed (35:8). It reaches its climax in 62:10. God's plan has triumphed and the nations will leave behind the rule of the flesh and will turn to walk after the rule of the spirit. These nations united with God's remnant (v. 24) will bless the earth because Egypt has become God's people, Assyria the work of his hands, and Israel his inheritance (25).

CHAPTER TWENTY

Egypt and Ethiopia

Vv. 1-6 – The Trust That Failed

Isaiah has already announced the destiny of Ethiopia (ch. 18) and God's judgment on and promises to Egypt (ch. 19) In 715 B.C. Egypt was overcome by Shabako, ruler of Ethiopia, who united the two under the overlordship of Ethiopia, a subservience that continued until 664 B.C. This period is what Isaiah seems to be discussing in this chapter.

The year that Tarton[123] came to Ashdod was 713B.C. Ashdod was a major city in Philistia under subjection to Assyria. It was probably the most fortified city of Philistia. While Sargon is famous in history, this is the only place his name is mentioned in scripture. He succeeded Shalmaneser V to the Assyrian throne in 722 or 721 B.C.[124] and played a significant role in the history of Judah and Israel. Ashdod miscalculated as weakness Sargon's not having conducted a major excursion into Palestine after 720. Based upon that miscalculation Ashdod rebelled in 713 B.C. While it drew others into the rebellion, Judah does not seem to have been one of them. Ashdod was taken. Sargon himself led a campaign against the rebels in 711 B.C. Promised help from Egypt and Ethiopia never came.

God assigned Isaiah a symbolical message. He was to remove his sackcloth from off his loins and his shoes off his feet. Isaiah did as he was commanded and walked naked[125] and barefoot among the people. The tenure of Isaiah's symbolic message was three years. The subject was the defeat of Egypt and Ethiopia by Assyria. For a period there was intermittent war between Assyria and Egypt. The decisive battle occurred in 663. B.C. when Ashurbanipal sacked Thebes (Noamon, Nahum 3:8), carrying away captives and much plunder (3).

Had they listened to Isaiah they would have known that Egypt and Ethiopia would not be around to help because Assyria would lead them away. Their not being either around or able to assist Judah would leave Judah dismayed and confounded. They expected help from Ethiopia and they expected Egypt to assist them in maintaining their glory.

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[123] "Tartan" is not the name of a person. It is the title of the Assyrian-commander-in-chief.

[124] Keil & Delitzsch place Sargon's reign from 721 – 702 B.C.

[125] With the great importance attached to the clothing in the East, where the feelings upon this point are peculiarly sensitive and modest, a person was looked upon as stripped and naked if he had only taken off his upper garment. What Isaiah was directed to do, therefore, was simply opposed to common custom, and not to moral decency. He was to lay aside the dress of a mourner and preacher of repentance, and to have nothing on but his tunic (*cetoneth*); and in this, as well as barefooted, he was to show himself in public. This was the costume of a man who had been robbed and disgraced, or else of a beggar or prisoner of war.

They had not yet learned that leaning on the arm of flesh will fail. It leaves the people of the coast-land[126] with a confession and one question. They confessed that they had looked to Ethiopia and Egypt for deliverance from Assyria. That having failed, they ask how the will escape (4-6).

Surely this message is for us today. How similar it is to the message in the Hebrew letter. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard" (Heb. 2:3). And again, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven" (Heb. 12:25).

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Babylon, Dumah, and Arabia

Vv. 1-10 – Babylon, The Wilderness of the Sea

This chapter contains three burdens – Babylon, Edom, and Arabia. The dates of Isaiah's prophecy of these burdens is uncertain.

The historical background of this burden is helpful to its understanding. Shalmaneser V died around 722 or 721 B.C. Upon his death Merodach-baladan rebelled against Assyria and proclaimed Babylon's independence. In 710 B.C. Sargon II attacked Babylon and was welcomed as a deliverer. In 703 B.C. Merodach –baladan made another attempt at overcoming Assyria's rule. It may be that his sending ambassadors to visit Hezekiah upon Hezekiah's cure from a terminal illness was an attempt to get Hezekiah to join with him (2 Kings 20:12-18; Isa. 39). Sennacherib responded with a major campaign against Babylon in 700 B.C. followed by another in 695 B.C. that resulted in the sacking of Babylon. Sennacherib was murdered and his son, Esarhadden, followed him to the Assyrian throne, ruling from 681-669 B.C. Esarhadden rebuilt Babylon and brought it some stability for a while. Trouble again erupted

[126] This probably includes all of Palestine, including Phonecia, Philistia, and Judah.

and Ashurbanipal and his army marched on Babylon in 651 B.C., besieging it from some three years. The king of Babylon, despairing of victory, set fire to his palace and perished in the flames. In 626 B.C. Nabopolassr drove the Assyrians out of Babylon and was made king. In 612 Ninevah was destroyed, and upon Nabopolassar's death in 605 B.C. his son, Nebuchadnezzar became king. He was Babylon's last powerful king. During his 53 year reign (605-562 B.C.) he made Babylon one of the world's most beautiful cities, his Hanging Gardens becoming one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In 539 Cyrus captured Babylon and brought the Babylonian Empire to an end. He did not destroy Babylon, but it began to slowly decline. With the invasion of Alexander the Great, the decline accelerated.

Isaiah is not given to using symbolic names, but he does use some.[127] Here he calls Babylon "the wilderness of the sea."[128] Isaiah has already spoken of Babylon's future destruction (13:20-22; 14:23) and will speak of it again (ch. 47). The burden that comes upon Babylon will sweep through Babylon as whirlwinds in the South from a terrible land. The grievous (hard) vision that God gave Isaiah was that Babylon, treacherous nation that dealt treacherously with men and a destroyer that destroyed men and nations, would itself be destroyed. It would come from Elam and Media which, depending upon the time in view, would be aligned with either Assyria or Cyrus. The defeat of Babylon would cause the sighing of oppressed people. including Judah, to cease. That which Isaiah saw in his "hard vision" was such that it led to his great anguishing.[129] He saw the leaders of Babylon set a watchman and then go to the banquet tables to eat and drink. Instead of debauchery Baby-

[127] Ethiopia is "the land of rustling wings" ((18:1); Edom is "Dumah" (21:11); Jerusalem is "Ariel" (29:1); Egypt is "Rahab" (30:7).

[128] Jeremiah helps to understand the phrase when he speaks of Babylon saying, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters. . . thine end is come" (51:13; see, Jer. 50:38; 51:42-43). John helps even more in Rev. 17:15 when he says of Babylon, "The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

[129] It may seem strange that a prophet would anguish over God's judgment revealed in the vision. However, how could God's prophet rejoice at the perishing of Babylon when God himself is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

lon's leaders are called upon to arise and prepare for battle. The battle is not named. It could be Babylon's fall at the hands of Cyrus or it could be used to summarize the many attacks that ultimately led to Babylon's fall.

Vv. 6-10 – The watchman and his mission

The Lord instructs Isaiah to set a watchman who is to declare that which he sees. When he sees the approaching troops he is to cry out their coming and announce that Babylon is fallen. The result will be the destruction of her gods and graven images that are broken unto the ground. Jehovah has carried out his will and the lifeless powerless gods of Babylon have utterly failed and been brought to naught. This declaration lays the groundwork for Chapters 40-66.

There is a difference of opinion on whether "my thrashing and the grain of my floor" refers to Babylon or Judah. Keil & Delitzsch argue for the latter: "Threshing (*dūsh*) is a figure used to represent *crushing oppression* in Isa. 41:15 and Mic. 4:12, 13; and *judicial visitation* in Jer. 51:33 (a parallel by which we must not allow ourselves to be misled, as Jeremiah has there given a different turn to Isaiah's figure, as he very frequently does); and again, as in the present instance, *chastising plagues,* in which wrath and good intention are mingled together. Israel, placed as it was under the tyrannical supremacy of the imperial power, is called the *medŭsshâh* (for *medūshah,* i.e., the threshing) of Jehovah,—in other words, the corn threshed by Him; also His "child of the threshing-floor," inasmuch as it was laid in the floor, in the bosom as it were of the threshing-place, to come out threshed (and then to become a thresher itself, Mic. 4:12, 13). This floor, in which Jehovah makes a judicial separation of grains and husks in Israel, was their captivity. Babylon is the instrument of the threshing wrath of God."

Vv. 11-12 – The Burden of Edom

Edom is also known as Dumah. The name as used here is symbolical. It means deep, utter silence, and therefore the land of the dead (Psa. 94:17; 115:17). The name is turned into an emblem of the future fate of Edom. It becomes a land of deathlike sleep, deathlike darkness (11).

The oracle consists of one question addressed to Isaiah from Seir and Isaiah's answer. The inquiry seeks to know how far the night is spent. Like a sleepless person wants the night to end, so also the Edomites want to know how much remains of their night of tribulation. The watchman, Isaiah, responds. He tells them that a morning is coming, and at the same time a night, i.e., that even if the morning dawns, it will be swallowed up again directly by night. And the history was quite in accordance with such an answer. The Assyrian period of judgment was followed by the Chaldean, and the Chaldean by the Persian, and the Persian by the Grecian, and the Grecian by the Roman. Again and again there was a glimmer of morning dawn for Edom (and what a glimmer in the Herodian age!), but it was swallowed up directly by another night, until Edom became an utter *Dūmâh,* and disappeared from the history of the nations. The prophet does not see to the utmost end of these Edomitish nights, but he has also no consolation for Edom. It is altogether different with Edom from what it is with Israel, the nocturnal portion of whose history has a morning dawn, according to promise, as its irrevocable close. The prophet therefore sends the inquirers home. Would they ask any further questions, they might do so, might turn and come. In *shūbū* (turn back) there lies a significant though ambiguous hint. It is only in the case of their turning, coming, i.e., coming back converted, that the prophet has any consolatory answer for them. So long as they are not so, there is suspended over their future an interminable night, to the prophet as much as to themselves. The way to salvation for every other people is just the same as for Israel,—namely, the way of repentance.

Vv. 13-17 – The Burden upon Arabia

Arabia is the name given to the peninsula lying east of Palestine and the Red Sea.[130] Its inhabitants were known as "the children of the east."[131] The times were characterized by wars, and the Dedanites, who

[130] It is the largest peninsula in the world covering an area of almost one million square miles. Alaska and Texas combined have 925,026 square miles.

[131] The term "children of the east" seems to have been applied to the inhabitants of any part of the country E. of Palestine. It is stated that Jacob, when he fled from

were traveling traders, had to leave their regular routes and seek safety in forests along the way.[132] Their normal sources of water and food were not available, so the people of Tema[133] surreptitiously brought them bread and water. The Dedanites' caution was necessitated by the fact that they were fleeing from the weapons and grievousness of war. The name *Kedar* is here the collective name of the Arabic tribes generally. In the stricter sense, Kedar, like Nebaioth, which is associated with it, as a nomadic tribe of Ishmaelites, which wandered as far as the Elanitic Gulf. Within the space of a year, measured as exactly as is generally the case where employers and laborers are concerned, Kedar's freedom, military strength, numbers, and wealth (all these together

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Esau, "came to the land of the children of the east" (Gen 29:1), and the place to which he came was Haran in Mesopotamia. In Jer 49:28 the inhabitants of **Kedar** are called "the children of the east," and in later Jewish literature, **Kedar** is identified with the Arabs (see **KEDAR**). Job was designated as "the greatest of all the children of the east" (Job 1:3), and the land of Uz was mentioned as his home (Job 1:1). While it is impossible absolutely to locate the land of Uz, it must have been on the edge of the desert which was E. of Palestine. The children of the E. seem to have been famous for their wisdom. It is said that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east" (1 Ki 4:30), and "Wise-men from the east" came to Jerusalem seeking the one that was born king of the Jews (Mt 2:1).

[132] *Brown Driver Briggs* supplies this definition. That in which the Dedanites hid was probably more of a thicket given the locale. "1 יַעַר **wood, forest, thicket — a.** *wood, forest, wooded* height, with trees to be felled; as producing trees; in designation of Solomon's palace; fig. of foes to be cut down and destroyed.

b. as hiding-place for fugitive; lurking-place of wild beasts.

c. stripped by voice of 'y; devoured by fire (fig. of the people); so in metaph. or sim. of 'y's judgments (fig. of Assyr.).

d. opp. כַּרְמֶל *(garden-land)* but also יְלֻמְּדֵכ רַעֲי *his garden woodland*, and יַעַר כַּרְמְלוֹ (secluded and fertile abode for flock, fig. of people).

e. = *thicket*, esp. as symbol of desolation; roy twømD;b *thicket-covered heights* (overgrown with bushes and trees).

f. יער(ה) עֲצֵי *trees of the forest* (in sim.)."

[133] An oasis in the Arabian desert, situated at the intersection of several major caravan routes. Possibly named for one of Ishmael's sons (Genesis 25:15; 1 Chronicles 1:30), Tema is mentioned in several poetic and prophetic passages (Job 6:19; Isaiah 21:14; Jeremiah 25:23).

constituting its glory), would all have disappeared. Nothing but a small remnant would be left of the heroic sons of Kedar and their bows.

The period of the fulfilment of the prophecy keeps us still within the Assyrian era. In Herodotus (2, 141), Sennacherib is actually called "king of Arabians and Assyrians" (compare Josephus, Ant. x. 1, 4); and both Sargon and Sennacherib, in their annalistic inscriptions, take credit to themselves for the subjugation of Arabian tribes. But in the Chaldean era Jeremiah predicted the same things against Kedar (Jer. 49) as against Edom; and Jer. 49:30, 31 was evidently written with a retrospective allusion to this oracle of Isaiah. When the period fixed by Isaiah for the fulfillment arrived, a second period grew out of it, and one still more remote, inasmuch as a second empire, viz., the Chaldean, grew out of the Assyrian, and inaugurated a second period of judgment for the nations. After a short glimmer of morning, the night set in a second time upon Edom, and a second time upon Arabia.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON TWELVE

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Valley of Vision: Jerusalem

Vv. 1-14 – Rebuke of the People's Spirit of Frivolity

Since chapter 13 Isaiah has been declaring God's judgment upon the nations. That which he declares here is not upon the heathen, but upon his own city where his people reside. Why does he do it? Has he not declared from the beginning that if God's people are going to live like heathens then they shall be treated the same as they.

In light of the reference to the "defenses of Judah" (22:8), "the city of David" (22:9), "the buildings of Jerusalem" (22:10), the "Old Pool" (22:11), and Hezekiah's government officials Shebna (22:15) and Eliakim (22:20), this chapter about the "Valley of Visions" (22:1,5) must relate to God's plan for Judah and Jerusalem. In this vision the prophet sees

people being captured and imprisoned (22:2–3), the walls of the city being battered, and Jerusalem's defenses being worthless (22:5–8).

Commentators have associated this attack on Jerusalem with (a) Sargon's invasion of Philistia in 712–711 BC; (b) Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC; and (c) the Babylonian conquest of the city in 587/586 BC. It is very unlikely that this prophecy fits 711 BC because there is no information that Jerusalem was attacked then (22:2). The references to restoring breaches in city walls (22:9–10) and directing water to the Lower Pool through a tunnel (probably Hezekiah's tunnel, 22:9–11) demonstrate that preparation for the Assyrian siege were already complete (2 Chr 32:1–5) and that this message came during the Assyrian siege in 701 BC (not after it was over). The joy and revelry demonstrate a sense of confidence (or overconfidence) in what the city of Jerusalem did to prepare itself for this attack (22:2, 13). In stark contrast to this attitude, the prophet lamented (22:4,12) because the people were not putting their trust in God who planned all of these events (22:11). The period of Hezekiah was the time when Shebna and Eliakim worked within the king's court (36:3), though in a couple of different official positions because of Shebna's unwise behavior (22:15–25).

After discussing the possibilities Haley concludes that the most likely choices for the events covered by the prophecy are 1) the siege by Sennacherib (701 B.C.) and 2) the entire period from Sennacherib's siege to the fall of the city at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.).

"The valley of vision" is a name given to Jerusalem and not to a particular valley. Others prophets applied other names. Jeremiah (21:13) calls it "the inhabitant of the valley and of the rock of the plain." He also calls it "the mountain of the fields" (Jer. 17:3). Zephaniah (1:11) applies the epithet Maktesh (the "mortar" or "cauldron") to a portion of the city. Symbols have meaning and this one is no exception. A valley is a deep, still, solitary place, but shit in by mountains. Jerusalem was an enclosed place, hidden and shut of from the world. It was also the place God chose to show to his prophets the mysteries of his government of the world. Isaiah's message is that Jehovah's judgment is about to fall upon this city and no prophecies relating to the Assyrian

age of judgment or those proclaimed in the midst of the Assyrian calamities are as destitute as this one.

It begins by exposing the nature and worthlessness of their confidence. They sit on their rooftops watch the enemy advance and are certain that they will defeat their enemy. It is as if they are settling in to watch a parade without realizing that it is the victory parade of their enemy. They are not even given the honor of falling in battle. The battle is over before it began without an arrow being fired. Their leaders desert the city but they are caught and bound by the opposing army. Fast forward to the capture of Zedekiah when Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:7-11).

That which he prophesies strikes Isaiah's heart. He asks that his people look away while he weeps bitterly. The Hebrew word translated "bitterly" means to weep until one is exhausted. The day of God's judgment is a day in which men crowd together with great noise (discomfiture, confusion panic), a day in which Jerusalem and its inhabitants will be trodden down by foes, and a day of perplexity. It is a day from the Lord in the valley of vision in which the walls of the city were undermined and, as they fall as a result of the siege-artillery the noise is as "crying to the mountains" (4-5).

Of the nations in Assyria's army Isaiah mentions two – Elam and Kir.[134] Together they represent the expanse of the Assyrian empire from south to north. There were foot soldiers who uncovered the shield[135] accompanied by charioteers and horsemen. Judah is overrun. Its

[134] Elam was the Semitic nation of Susiana (Chuzistan), whose original settlements were the row of valleys between the Zagros chain and the chain of advanced mountains bounding the Assyrian plains on the east, and who were greatly dreaded as bowmen (Ezek. 32:24; Jer. 49:35), and *Kir,* the inhabitants of the country of the Cyrus river, which was an Assyrian province, according to 2 Kings 16:9 and Amos 1:5, and still retained its dependent position even in the time of the Achaemenides, when Armenia, at any rate, is expressly described in the arrowheaded writings as a Persian province, though a rebellious one.

[135] Taken off for the battle, the leather covering of the shield was intended to protect the embossed figures on it from dust or injury during the march. "The quiver" and "the shield" express two classes—light and heavy armed troops.

choice valleys are filled with horsemen and chariots waiting at the gate for entry into the city (6-7).

The invaders shall take away the veil of Judah. The veil has been variously interpreted. Is it the veil that blinded them to the threatening danger? Is it the removal of that which has protected Judah from shame and disgrace so that it now stood open to shame and dishonor? Is it a reference to God who has withdrawn his presence and thus his protection from Judah so that Judah had no defense that would or could succeed? Perhaps it is the latter. God certainly did withdraw his presence and protection. It was there when Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem, but it was absent when Nebuchadnezzar invaded (Ezek. 11:22-25). With God's departure they have only themselves on which to rely. The arm of flesh still fails them. Their only hope was to look at the armor in the house of the forest. This is probably a reference to the forest-house built by Solomon upon Zion for the storing and display of valuable arms and utensils. Its name was derived from the four rows of cedar columns that ran all around it 1 Kings 7:2-5). They saw the many breaches of the city of David and they gathered together the waters of the lower pool[136] to begin to prepare for the siege. They then set about to repair the breaches in the walls. They began by numbering the houses and then pulled down those that were suitable and used them as a source of materials with which to repair the wall. Finally they added another water source from the old pool (8-11a).

Unfortunately, they failed to do the one thing needful. They did not turn to the One who had purposed the event long ago and who would bring it to pass. That One was now calling them to weeping, mourn-

[136] Keil & Delitzsch suggest that the lower pool and the old pool, probably the upper, i.e., the lower and upper Gihon, were upon the western side of the city, the lower (*Briket es-Sultan*) to the west of Sion, the upper (*Birket el-Mamilla*) farther up to the west of Akra (Robinson, i. 483–486; v. Raumer, *Pal.* pp. 305–6). *Kibbētz* either means to collect in the pool by stopping up the outflow, or to gather together in the reservoirs and wells of the city by means of artificial canals. The latter, however, would most probably be expressed by אָסַף; so that the meaning that most naturally suggests itself is, that they concentrate the water, so as to be able before the siege to provide the city as rapidly as possible with a large supply.

ing, baldness, and girdling with sackcloth. But there was no repentance. Instead of these events leading them to repentance and return to God, they reacted by seeking their comfort by sinking more deeply into depravity and degradation, adopting the Hedonistic philosophy of eating and drinking because tomorrow they would die. God responds by telling them that their transgression will not be forgiven until they die. They had committed sin that could be forgiven only by the death of the nation (11b-14).

Vv. 15-25 – The Failure of the Stewards

The prophets often addressed their words to the leadership of society because leaders typically set the course for the nation. Faithful leaders brought blessing upon the country; unfaithful leaders brought ruin. Shebna and Eliakim are examples of each.

Shebna (2 Kings 18:18, 26) is officially described as "over the house." This was the name given to an office of state of great importance in both kingdoms (1 Kings 4:6; 18:3), in fact the highest office of all, and one so vastly superior to all others (Isa. 36:3; 37:2), that it was sometimes filled by the heir to the throne (2 Chron. 26:21). The person "who was over the house" had the whole of the domestic affairs of the sovereign under his superintendence, and was therefore also called the *socēn* or administrator (from *sâcan,* related to *shâcan,* to assist in a friendly, neighborly manner, or to be generally serviceable: see on Job 22:2), as standing nearest to the king. In this post of eminence Shebna had helped to support that proud spirit of self-security and self-indulgent forgetfulness of God, for which the people of Jerusalem had in the foregoing oracle been threatened with death. At the same time, he may also have been a leader of the Egyptian party of magnates, and with this anti-theocratical policy may have been the opponent of Isaiah in advising the king. Hence the general character of Isa. 22:1–14 now changes into a distinct and special prophecy against this Shebna. The time at which it was fulfilled was the same as that referred to in Isa. 22:1–14. There was still deep peace, and the great minister of state was driving about with splendid equipages, and engaged in superintending the erection of a family sepulcher. In this post of eminence Shebna had helped to support that proud spirit of self-security and self-indulgent forgetfulness

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While Shebna occupies a position of trust he was using his position for his own gain. The sepulcher that he erected was massive and so designed that he might be remembered as a great man (16). Jehovah would not permit Shebna's unfaithfulness to stand. He would hurl Shebna away violently and wrap him up closely with shame . Neither Shebna nor his family had any use for such a sepulcher because he was going to lose his office and taken into captivity where he would die (17-19).

Shebna's replacement would be Eliakim. If the Shebna and Eliakim mentioned in 36:3 are the same two men, then these changes in position had occurred by the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Eliakim is called the "servant of Jehovah," as one who was already a servant of God in his heart and conduct. His appointment will be accompanied by an investiture. (20-21).

The "key" represents the power of the key. For this reason it is placed upon his shoulder (See Isa. 9:6). This key was properly handled by the king (Rev. 3:7), and therefore by the "house-mayor" only in his stead. The power of the keys consisted not only in the supervision of the royal chambers, but also in the decision of who was and who was not to be received into the king's service.[137] Eliakim's leadership will be exer-

[137] There is a resemblance, therefore, to the giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter under the New Testament. But there the "binding" and "loosing" introduce another figure, though one similar in sense; whereas here, in the "opening" and "shutting," the figure of the key is retained.

cised with compassionate authority and provide stability "as a nail in a sure place."[138] Unfortunately, Eliakim was made to bear more, and more responsibilities were heaped upon him. Finally the peg could sustain them no longer, it gave way, and it bore the burden no more (22-25).

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Burden of Tyre

Vv. 1-7 – The Judgment of Tyre and the Effect of Her Fall

This is the last of the oracles against the nations. These nations are not just symbolic representative cities; they are real nations at the time of Isaiah that God will judge for their sins. God's destruction of all these nations, including the great sea power Tyre, clearly demonstrates God's sovereign power over every people on land and sea. Looking at these messages from another perspective, Tyre was a Phoenician city on the Mediterranean coast. It provided important support to the Phoenician economy as a leading merchant and port city. People came by land and sea to trade with Tyre. It was a significant city of wealth where ideas as well as goods were exchanged. As independent as it might have been, God still controlled it.[139]

Isaiah gets straight to the point. He describes the ships of Tyre howling[140] as they return home and observe the wasteland that their home as become. They hear rumors of its fate from the ships that they meet on their journey. This will be terrible news to the sailors when they learn that their homes, families, and secure city no longer exist. They will naturally wail in agony about what has happened (1).

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[138] The Hebrew word translated "nail" in the ASV may be translated "peg."

[139] Ezekiel's later portrayal of the wealth and security of Tyre in Ezek 26–28 should not be read back into the situation of Tyre in this text, but those chapters give the modern reader a fuller understanding of the wealth and stature of this great nation.

[140] Isaiah's language is imperative – he calls on them to howl. He uses other imperatives as he continues the pronouncement of judgment.

Isaiah next calls upon the inhabitants of Sidon and the coastal islands of Phoenicia to "mourn" (better then "be still"). They are to mourn because those who have replenished them (enabled their wealth) by trade with Egypt can do so no more (vv. 2-3).

Isaiah exhorts the Phoenician people to be ashamed and embarrassed because of their loss of honor and glory. "The sea hath spoken, the stronghold of the sea." This language may refer to the same entity, but likely it refers to two with the latter applying to Tyre, which subsequently speaks. The ancient embarrassment of a childless woman is used to declare that the destruction of the Phoenician cities (the sons and daughter of the main cities) will no longer give birth to new cities or nurture new colonies. This terrible news of the total decimation of Phoenicia will affect Tyre's trading partners. The Egyptians will be in anguish because their wealth depended on the ships of Tyre that transported their products to market (4-5).

The last imperative of this section is similar to v. 1. It calls on the people to wail because of their great loss. They may escape to Tarshish but there they shall continue wailing.[141] Given the destruction and wailing, God asks if this is their joyous city that existed from days of old and traveled afar in trading and getting wealth. Thus this imperative ironically brings to people's mind the hopelessness of Tyre's situation. It will be hard to fathom the enormous changes in life at Tyre. Once this city was full of riches and excitement, the wild carousing life of sailors and merchants, and all the exuberant nightlife that goes with that. This was the nation that had everything going for it. It colonized various cities to protect and establish its trading operations far away from home. But now what has happened to that very old city? This devastating defeat will transform it into something totally different from what it was in the past.

Vv. 8-12 – Jehovah, the Executioner of Judgment

[141] Some suggest Isaiah is saying that they would want to escape to Trashish but they would find no way of escape. In either case they continue wailing.

How did this destruction come to pass? By chance? Bad luck? Natural catastrophe? Not at all. God wants all to know that once more Jehovah of hosts has worked his purpose! Isaiah begins with a rhetorical question designed to lead all, especially his Hebrew audience, to think about their own situation and to teach them a valuable historical lesson. What will happen in Tyre is not totally unrelated to what will happen in Judah. Although politicians, rulers, and people looking back on it will have theories as to what went wrong at Tyre, Isaiah challenges the people in Jerusalem to give the real reason Tyre and Sidon will change from an exciting and prosperous commercial center that influenced all the Mediterranean nations to a place of no importance. Was this just a freak accident that is unexplainable, was its defeat due to poor leadership by the king of Tyre, or was the fall of Tyre based on the wise strategy of a cunning Assyrian king? How could a powerful nation that had crowned many kings of small city-states suddenly have this happen to it? How could merchants be treated one day like a prince or famous person and then suddenly be gone? What happened to these proud, wealthy, and powerful people? Someone is responsible for bringing about the dramatic defeat of a nation that for years seemed to have unlimited wealth, power, friends, and trading partners (8).

Isaiah answers his own question (9). Jehovah of hosts purposed it. His plan included profaning and defiling the pride of man that seeks his own glory. God alone is to be glorified and set apart as holy. Isaiah explains how God's plan will apply to "the honorable of the earth" who think they are so great. They will be brought low, disgraced, and humiliated (9).

One consequence of Tyre's fall was that its colonies, like Tarshish, became independent. They no longer do the bidding of Tyre; they can spread themselves over the land like the Nile overflowing its boundaries (10).

Isaiah now explains to Tarshish that which happened to its mother country. Jehovah, reaching over the sea, has thrown the lands of Hither Asia and Egypto-Ethiopia into a state of the most anxious excitement, and has summoned them as instruments of destruction with re-

gard to Kena'an.[142] Hitherto this nation has been untouched, like a virgin, but now it resembles one ravished and defiled. If now they flee across to Cyprus (*cittiyim* or *cittim*), there will be no rest for them even there, because the colony, emancipated from the Phoenician yoke, will only be too glad to rid herself to the unwelcome guests from the despotic mother country (11-12).

Vv. 13-18 – The Fate of Phoenicia: Though Cast Down, Tyre's Prosperity Shall Be Restored

If one or two people might still doubt the power of God's hand or his ability to fulfill his plan, Isaiah offers one final proof that what God says actually happens. Some of God's past predictions about Babylon have already come true by this time, so it would be foolish for anyone to question what God says. Shortly before 702 BC and the giving of this message, Sennacherib put down a revolt by Merodoch-baladan by attacking the cities of Babylon, tearing down its fortresses, making it a place for wild animals, and turning the land into ruins. Now that great country is nothing. If God can do this to Babylon, why can he not do the same to Tyre or any other nation (even Judah)?

The paragraph ends with the same exhortation that was at the beginning of the paragraph. The sailors on the ships of Tarshish should wail because God will destroy Tyre, that great fortress in the sea! There is no hope for it (13-14).

After predicting the fall of Tyre, the prophet surprisingly speaks about the future revival of Tyre after seventy years, similar to the positive words at the end of the Egypt oracle in 19:18–25 (at the end of the first series of five nations). Just as the Egyptians and Assyrians will one day worship God (19:21), so the people of Tyre will one day present holy gifts to the Lord (23:18). The implication of this prophecy for the prophet's audience in Judah is that the people of Judah need to trust God, for several of these foreign nations will eventually see the error of their ways and come to trust God.

[142] Phoenicia called itself *Kena'an* (Canaan).

Once Tyre is destroyed, it will be in decline for about seventy years (23:15). Instead of being a major player in international trade, it will be forgotten. The seventy years specifies the average life of a king—or a man—in Psa. 90:10. This time frame is much longer than the earlier "one to three years of a hired worker" in 16:14 and 21:16. It is impossible to say when this seventy-year period began or ended, but if the Assyrians humbled the Phoenicians around 702 BC then the seventy years would extend to around 630 BC, the time when the Assyrian empire collapsed after the death of Ashurbanipal. Since Tyre will be insignificant during this seventy-year period, the text does not give any details concerning what will happen there. Instead it moves immediately to the period after the seventy years by quoting the "Song of the Prostitute"—probably a song that Isaiah's audience had heard before.

The song seems to deride or mock a haggard prostitute who is forgotten and no longer popular. Instead of men knocking on her door to visit her, she must take to the streets to play beautiful music and sing suggestive songs that will attract some business. The hope is that she will be remembered instead of forgotten, just like Tyre will want to be remembered after her period of decline. Tyre is not called a harlot here; her period of decline is only compared to the life of a forgotten harlot (15-16).

The final few verses describe how God will treat Tyre at the end of the seventy years. Now Tyre is compared to a harlot, but this symbolizes a return to being an important player in international trade. Because God will look with favor on Tyre, she will once again actively return to prominence and not be a forgotten merchant. Some of the money Tyre earns from international trade will be set apart as holy to God. Instead of hording tons of gold in their vaults for their own pleasures, they will generously give it to the temple of God to be used to support temple personnel who dwell in God's presence. This suggests a dramatic change of priorities and a heart transformation that desires to glorify God. This prophecy is consistent with the 2:1–4 that all nations will come to Zion to see God.

Isaiah still speaks to a Hebrew audience in Judah about God's sovereign control over all the nations of the earth. The Hebrews not only ob-

served the mighty power of God's outstretched arm against other nations; they also learned from these examples why God would judge each nation. As God's people faced the reality of military action against Judah, it became clear that it made no sense to look to any of these nations for security through alliances. Since God will soon destroy all of these nations, Judah's only hope was to trust in the power of Almighty God. This basic theological commitment to trust God for everything in life is held up again and again as the only hope for mankind. Life, liberty, security, and prosperity are dependent on the gracious plan of a sovereign God, not on any arrogant attempts to manipulate circumstances through human wisdom, military might, or political alliances. God has revealed this truth to his prophets and history proves that it is so; therefore, each generation and each nation must choose how it will respond. The proud and self-reliant will be humbled; the humble people who trust God will walk in the security of his plan.

SECTION THREE

World Judgment and Deliverance of God's People

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A World Judgment

Vv. 1-13 – Desolation of the Earth and the World City

This series of prophecies (chs. 24-27) is intended to stand in a relation of steady progress to the oracles concerning the nations; and this relation is sustained by the fact that Jeremiah read them in connection with these oracles (compare Isa. 24:17, 18, with Jer. 48:43, 44). Chs. 24–27 stand in the same relation to Isa. 13–23, as Isa. 11, 12 to Isa. 7–10.

There was no other than Isaiah who was so incomparable a master of language. Again, the incomparable depth in the contents of Isa. 24–27 does not shake our confidence in his authorship, since the whole book of this Solomon among the prophets is full of what is incomparable. And in addition to much that is peculiar in this cycle of prophecies, which does not astonish us in a prophet so richly endowed, and so

characterized by a continual change "from glory to glory," the whole cycle is so thoroughly Isaiah's in its deepest foundation, and in a hundred points of detail, that it is most uncritical to pronounce the whole to be certainly not Isaiah's simply because of these peculiarities.

"Behold" is one of Isaiah's favorite introductions of important themes (cf. 3:1; 17:1; 19:1; 26:1). Hailey suggests that it usually introduces something in the immediate future, but that is not always the case.[143] Whether near or far, Keil &Delitzsch say that it always refers to something in the future. Here the term focuses on Jehovah who makes the world empty.[144] The whole earth will be made waste, turned upside down, and its inhabitants scattered. There will be no respect of persons. It will affect people and priest, servant and master, maid and mistress, buyer and seller, creditor and debtor, taker of interest and giver of interest. Its certainty is guaranteed by the word of Jehovah. The reason for the devastation is that the earth is polluted as a result of transgressing the laws,[145] violating the statutes, and breaking the everlasting covenant. The violators are found guilty, sentence is executed and few are left. The world cries out for its loss. The waste city[146] is broken down, its mirth is gone, and the city is left desolate. The devastation is complete. That which remains is compared to the thrashing of the olive tree to get the last fruit and the gleaning to gather the last grape ("the few men left" ?, v. 6).

Vv. 14-23 – Premature Rejoicing and More Judgments

[143] An example is the use in 7:14 where the Son to be born of a virgin was centuries in the future.

[144] The term "earth" may refer to the whole earth (e.g., Gen. 1:1, 10-12), or it may be translated "land," e.g., the "land" of the nation of Israel. Here it seems to be used in the cosmological sense.

[145] The "law" is not just the Mosaic code of Israel. It includes the law written on the heart of the Gentiles (Rom. 2:15).

[146] Some commentators see a particular city, including Jerusalem. However, given "earth" in a cosmological sense and "law" in the broad sense, it is more likely that the "city" is a general term depicting the general city of the earth to be estranged from God.

Rejoicing arises from the recognition of the majesty of Jehovah in judgment and mercy. The praise comes from the sea, literally, "lights" or "fires," denoting the direction from which the light dawns. It reaches the isles of the sea, the Mediterranean, and the lands in between. They have begun to see that God's hand controls world affairs. The songs come from the uttermost parts of the earth, *i.e.*, God's judgment had universal influence.

"Glory to the righteous" is the theme of the songs.[147] While Isaiah identifies with those rejoicing, he recognizes that the rejoicing is premature; thus he declares that he "pines" (wastes away). The conditions justify more judgment, even judgment that will be more severe than those already administered. In spite of "the few" who rejoice, there is no real conversion in the world around him. The treacherous only grow more so, indeed feel as the inhabitant of the earth might, there is no escape. The wicked will cover the earth, but God's judgment will follow them. Earlier the earth was emptied and laid waste. Now it is broken, rent asunder, and shaken violently. It will stagger like a drunken man and swing to and fro like a hammock. The weight of sin has reached the point where the earth cannot support it. Jehovah will not tolerate it; the earth will fall never to rise again.

Is this the final judgment that is under consideration? Many commentators so conclude. The strongest support is Isaiah's statement that the earth will fall and not rise again. However, one must always remember that similarity of language does not of itself establish identity of meaning. The question is what the language means in this context. Isaiah's prophecy is concerned primarily, if not completely, with the coming of the Messiah. Thus far there has been no passage in Isaiah

[147] The glory may be offered to Jehovah, the Righteous One, or it may be offered in recognition of the righteous ones who have triumphed in the judgment. The KJV and ASV use the latter and the NASV use the former. It seems to be better to understand it as the KJV and ASV with those who have escaped God's judgment rejoicing because they are considered righteous before the Lord. This is supported by the fact that, unless here, God is never called "the Righteous One" in scripture.

that refers to final judgment.[148] Hailey makes a strong case that this passage makes no such reference. He contends that it refers to "the total and complete collapse of pagan powers, to the failure and destruction of the heathen world, to the defeat of lust and the forces governed by it." The phrase "in that day" always refers to that which is being discussed in the context. One of the events that will happen in that day is that Jehovah will "punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." This description fits "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). The battle between these forces and heavenly forces originated in Eden and continues to the coming of Christ. The conflict and the defeat of Satan's forces are described in Revelation. Satan and his forces are thrown down from the high position that they had held (Rev. 12:7-10). With the downfall of Satan the kings of the earth are destined to defeat (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-21). With the defeat of Satan by Jesus, Satan was cast into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3; his "prison" v. 7). Significantly, "after many days shall they be visited (margin, "punished"). Satan's defeat by Jesus truly shook the earth to the point that it could not rise again to its former power. Truly did John write, "And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). Verse 23 concludes Isaiah's discussion and clearly that of which he is speaking is the reign of Christ that began when his Father gave him the throne of his father, David (Luke 1:32). He is now reigning in heaven and, according to 1 Thess. 4:17, he will never again be on the earth. Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, identifies the occurrence of this event: "and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever (Micah 4:7). In the same context he says that this will occur in the latter days (Micah 4:1-4; Isa. 2:2-4), the age of the Messiah. The Hebrew writer connects these

[148] It is certainly true that some passages have been interpreted by commentators to refer to the millennial reign of Christ. However, since there is no such doctrine taught by scripture properly understood no passage can be properly understood to refer to final judgment.

events with the present age when he writes to Christians then living, "but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:22-24).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Hymns of Thanksgiving for the Divine Mercy

Vv. 1-5 – A Hymn of Thanksgiving for Victory over the Terrible Ones

Chapter 25 contains three hymns of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah for victory over the world forces that stood in opposition to his spiritual people. He is also praised for his offer of salvation to the heathen nations and for His reward to those who wait for him. A fourth song follows in Chapter 26. Isaiah also continues to speak of spiritual forces rather than actual cities or particular nations.

In chapter 24 there was premature rejoicing. Now, with Christ upon his throne reigning in Mount Zion Isaiah breaks forth in praise, exalting God's mighty name for the wonderful things that he had done in faithfulness and truth to accomplish his purpose. That which he has done in defeating the earth's nations and cities has left them as monuments to man's folly. That which he has done will lead people to glorify him and terrible nations to fear him. Note that Isaiah does not say that they will submit to him and follow him, but that they are impressed with the power and control that he exercises over his creation. Another factor that leads nations to honor and reverence is God's care for the poor and needy. He is a stronghold to the needy, a refuge from the storm, and a shade from the heat when the terrible ones come. As heat can be subdued by a cloud, so God will silence the noise of strangers. The second phrase helps make clear the first – the song of the terrible ones will be brought low. When the terrible ones fail to

recognize the power of God's and his judgments but still refuse to change their character, God shall bring them down.

Vv. 6-8 – Jehovah's Feast for the Nations

Isaiah now praises the feast that God has prepared in Mount Zion for the nations. It is described as a feast of fat things and fine wines.[149] It is the feast prepared for all, Gentiles and Jews, who flow to Mt. Zion (2:2-4). God will destroy the veil that covers people and nations. Some understand this to be a veil of sorrow, hopelessness and pessimism. However, Isaiah says in 60:2-3 that the darkness that covers the earth and the gross darkness that covers the people will be replaced by the rising of Jehovah and the seeing of his glory. The nations will come to God's light and the kings to his brightness. This is consistent with the New Testament. Paul described the Gentiles as "being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). Paul told the Corinthians that when Jews whose minds were hardened "turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2 Cor. 3:14-16). Having made provision for the great spiritual feast and having removed the veil of ignorance and unbelief, Isaiah proclaims a third provision. He hath swallowed up death forever,[150] wiping away all tears and taking away the reproach of his people. God said it and that guarantees it.

Vv. 9-12 – The Joy of Those Who Wait and the Destruction of the Proud

'In that day" places this section in the same time as that which precedes it in vv. 6-8. Those who have waited upon Jehovah will be saved. Their expectation has been realized; he has placed salvation in Zion for Israel [his] glory (46:13). They will rejoice in their salvation (cf. 61:3). The helping and protecting hand of Jehovah will rest upon his moun-

[149] The wine upon its lees is wine that remains on the settlings until it is matured at which time it is poured off and stained.

[150] This and other parts of this chapter convince some commentators that Isaiah is here speaking of and addressing Christ. That is certainly possible. Whichever is the case, Isaiah's language is strongly monotheistic.

tain. Isaiah makes an abrupt shift to the judgment of Moab in addition to chs. 15-16. Moab was a symbol of pride and arrogance (see 16:6; Jer. 48:29-30) that had to be destroyed before anyone could enjoy the salvation of Mt. Zion. Moab held Israel in derision, magnifying itself against Jehovah (Jer. 48:27, 42) and held the dignity of man in contempt (Amos 2:1; Zeph. 2:8, 10). Therefore, it would be trodden down in his place even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. Isaiah is not saying that God hates Moab. He is saying that the judgment against Moab will be complete. A century later Jeremiah held out a promise of hope to Moab (Jer. 48:47), but before Moab can participate in salvation its pride and arrogance must be destroyed. This is the point of Isaiah's prophecy.

This is substantiated by vv. 11-12. Moab will work to avoid destruction (keep from drowning), but will not succeed. Jehovah will succeed and Moab's pride and the skill of his hands by which he sought to avoid destruction will not avail. All of that in which Moab as trusted will be brought down, even to the dust.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Glory to God for His Righteous Deeds!

Vv. 1-6 – Praise for the Strong City

Chapter 25 closes with the land of Moab being trodden down and its lofty castles destroyed. Chapter 26 begins with the people of Judah boasting of an impregnable city. They proclaim their strong city in song, a city protected by walls and bulwarks of salvation from God. The gates are open so that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. Complete security is guaranteed. Jehovah "will be unto her a wall of fire round about,[151] and . . . the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. 2:5). Those who trust in the Lord shall be kept in perfect peace.[152] They

[151] This should bring to mind the hymn "I Have Found a Friend in Jesus." "He will never, never leave me, nor yet forsake me here, While I live by faith and do his blessed will; A wall of fire about me, I've nothing now to fear, With his manna he my hungry soul shall fill.

[152] The language of another hymn – "Peace, Perfect Peace."

will be recognized because their mind is stayed on God. They will also trust in Jehovah forever knowing that such trust is not misplaced because Jehovah is an everlasting rock (1-4).

The downfall of the arrogant is in view once more. God's overthrow of the world-city of wickedness is progressive. The stronghold of all that exalts itself against God must and will be brought down (2 Cor. 10:3-5 (5-6)).

Vv. 7-10 – The Effects of Jehovah's Judgments

How different from the way of the rebellious is the path of the righteous. Their way is upright because the One who is upright directs them. The righteous know that God's judgments must come, and through them they have waited upon the Lord. Jehovah's name and memorial has been the desire of their soul. They have undergone judgments but in those years they waited for the judgments of God to fall on their oppressors. They sought him in the night. This need not be a literal night; rather it is the night of their affliction. They were not impatient; they used the time of their affliction to seek earnestly after God, knowing that righteousness is learned when his judgments are in the earth (7-8).

The wicked do not appreciate favor. Receiving it does not deter them from their unrighteousness. Even in the land of the righteous surrounded by good examples they will ignore those examples and deal unjustly. Worse yet, he cannot behold and will not consider that it is from the hand of Jehovah.

Vv. 11-15 – The Lord Jehovah Versus "Other Lords"

Some place v. 11 with the preceding verses and some with the verses that follow. The latter seems to be the better choice. It begins a trilogy of addresses culminating in "O Jehovah, our God." However, it is closely related to the preceding verses because it continues the refusal of the wicked to learn righteousness. Here God lifts up his hand but it is not seen, *i.e.*, they remain unimpressed with God's nature and greatness. One thing they cannot miss, however, is God's zeal for his people. Another event that they will not miss is "the fire of God" (see, Psa.

79:9; Zeph. 1:18) that shall put them to shame and devour them. The second address is to Jehovah who will ordain peace for his people. Now they have learned that the arm of flesh will fail them, and they rely on God who has wrought all their works for them – deliverance, preservation, and accomplishments. The third address is to "Jehovah our God." The "other lords" who had dominion over God's people may be either conquering foreign rulers or heathen idols. In a sense both are involved because it was following idols that led to being conquered. God has destroyed the conquerors and oppressors, and his people look to him and his name. The nations and their god's have been defeated. The power of the idol-gods is altogether passed away. It was for this end—therefore—that God had visited and destroyed them, and made their very memory to perish. How strange it seems that the "great gods" whom so many millions worshipped in former times—Bel, and Asshur, and Ammon, and Zeus, and Jupiter—should have passed so completely away as to be remembered as myths if they are remembered at all. In contrast to the heathen idols God has increased his people, spiritual Israel, and increased the borders of their land. God is glorified.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON THIRTEEN

Vv. 16-19 – From Failure to Victory

Jehovah is surely the center of this chapter. *Jehovah* occurs 11 times and *Jah* occurs once. Jehovah's people revisit their affliction and acknowledge that it bought them to their knees in prayer. Their pain was as a woman in labor when they called upon God. Yet they were not delivered. They were disappointed because instead of bringing forth a child they brought forth wind – nothing. It was a false pregnancy. Their own efforts have failed. Their labor has produced neither salvation nor deliverance. The expression "before thee" implies that all of this occurred before God.

In the midst of this failure a cry of hope and encouragement peals forth. There will be victory – the dead shall live – but it will come from

God, not man. The assurance is made stronger by repetition. There are three views of this resurrection; 1) the figurative resurrection of the Jewish nation and their return to their land; 2) the final resurrection of the body at the end of time; and 3) a spiritual resurrection in the messianic age. Which is it?

1). The context has made clear that Isaiah is speaking of a resurrection when God's people return to him. It is a resurrection that will include an enlarging of the nation and an expansion of its borders (15). This did not occur in the first restoration from Babylon. It occurs with spiritual Israel and the second restoration (see Ezek. 37).

2). The resurrection of the body has been shown since Moses' experience at the burning bush (Ex. 3:6 – I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Jesus concluded from that that they were all alive, for God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him" (Luke 20:38-38). Moreover, in chapter 27 Isaiah identifies certain events (1-2, 12-13) with 26:19. This confirms that he is not speaking of the final resurrection of the body even though the language is similar. Jesus used similar language to describe both events in John 5:25-29. John 5:25 refers to a resurrection that "now is," *i.e.*, in the time of Jesus. John 5:28-29 refers to the final resurrection at the second coming. Note that in the latter verses Jesus said that "all that are in the tombs shall come forth." The resurrection of which Isaiah speaks is limited in scope. Thus, he cannot be referring to the final resurrection.

3). Viewing the resurrection of which Isaiah speaks as a spiritual resurrection is consistent with the context both of the chapter and the entire book. It is this resurrection of which Jesus speaks in John 5:25 and which was prophesied by Daniel (12:2).

"Thy dew is as the dew of herbs" *i.e.* it is refreshing, vivifying, potent to make even dead bones live. "*Thy* dew" may be said with reference to Jehovah, for changes in the person addressed are frequent in Isaiah; or with reference to the people of Israel, meaning, "the dew which Jehovah will shed *on thee*," i.e. on thy dead.

Vv. 20-21 – Wait for Jehovah

As people seek shelter in the time of storm, Jehovah calls upon his people to enter their chambers and hide themselves because of the coming indignation and to remain there "for a little moment" until it is over. God's punishment is coming upon the inhabitants of the earth. Literally, the language says that God is coming "to visit the iniquity of the inhabitant of the earth upon him." "The earth shall also disclose her blood." More especially, he comes to visit their blood-guiltiness upon them. Isaiah denounced "murderers" in his first chapter (ver. 21). Manasseh's murders were the main cause of the first destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:4). The second destruction was equally a judgment for the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, "from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias" (Matt. 23:35). Bloodshed "cries to God for vengeance" (Gen. 4:10; 9:6). Their sin will no longer be covered.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Overthrow of World Power and Ingathering of Israel

Vv. 1-6 – The New Vineyard

Commentators disagree on whether v. 1 should conclude chapter 26 or begin chapter 27. The dispute is another example of worrying about the irrelevant. Chapter and verse divisions are not part of the scripture and are not inspired. The dispute is irrelevant because v. 1 is clearly a transition between the two chapters. "In that day" relates that which Jehovah is doing in this chapter with that which he did in the last chapter, specifically 26:19-21 (but cf. also vv. 2, 12). The Lord's sword is hard and great and strong. With it he punishes leviathan, the swift and crooked serpent; he will slay the monster that is in the sea. What does leviathan represent? Some say there are three creatures represented and that may well be. It could also be one monster described by three terms to emphasize his nature. Those who believe that it is three creatures suggest that the terms represent three great countries – Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. That seems unlikely, however, because in chs. 13-23 Isaiah discussed the individual nations. In chs.

24-26 he has been discussing the earth in the cosmological sense. There is no reason to think that has changed in ch. 27. If that is the case the creature(s) would represent all of the powers that serve Satan in seeking to overcome God's purpose. God's sword is more powerful than them all and he will punish them.

"In that day" is the same period as v. 1. In that day the Lord will plant another vineyard, different from that described in ch. 5:1-7. Jehovah is the keeper who cares for it and protects it day and night. It will surely be watered with the dew of 26:19. The Lord's wrath has been satisfied; therefore, let the enemies of the vineyard, briars and thorns, come forth. God will do battle and destroy them by fire. On the other hand, if the enemies want peace they can lay hold on God's strength, bow before him and be reconciled to him. God is ready to make peace with the enemies of him and his people.

Finally, Isaiah looks to the future of the vineyard. It will bear fruit with which it will abundantly fill the earth. Jacob shall take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; they shall fill the face of the world with truth. The prophet here says, in a figure, just the same as the apostle Paul in Rom. 11:12, *i.e.*, that Israel, when restored once more to favor as a nation, will become "the riches of the Gentiles."

Vv. 7-11 – Expiation and Desolation

God's purpose is to plant and nourish his vineyard (2-6), but before that can happen his sword must remove the forces of the world and the land where the vineyard is to be planted (Jerusalem) must be prepared – Israel must be punished for its wickedness and idolatry. The punishment is not to be a slap on the wrist. It is to be an honest, and for that reason severe, expression of God's reaction to those who have rebelled against his way and who have turned from him to idols. But however severe their punishment may be, it will not be as severe as the punishment administered to those that smote and slayed God's people. God has promised that that would be the case: "And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God; Lev. 26:44).

The punishment shall be in measure – commensurate with the crime. Indeed, before he sent them away he contended with them and sought to turn them to repentance. Israel will not be exalted until it has been humbled because of its sin. Jehovah sifted Israel (compare the figure of the threshing-floor in Isa. 21:10), at the time when, by suspending captivity over it, He blew as violently upon it as if the east wind had raged (see Job 27:21). But he only sifted, he did not destroy.

The punishment will act as an expiation and the iniquity of Jacob will be no longer be the object of God's wrath. The fruit of the judgment will be the abolition of idolatry – the altars and the Asherim and the sun-images will rise no more. The fortified city[153] is abandoned, deserted and forsaken like the wilderness. It will only be fit for cattle grazing. Why will this city suffer so much more severely than Israel (27:7)? 27:11b reveals a contrast with 27:9. In one circumstance people will come to know the God who really is, be forgiven of sins, and abandon all worship of false gods (27:9), but the people in the fortified city will never come to fully discern how their sinfulness will affect their relationship to God. Therefore, their Creator will have no compassion on them. Later in the book of Isaiah this theme of the stupidity of idolatry is addressed again and again in order to persuade the prophet's audience to understand God and reject pagan worship (44:9–20; 47:10–11). The audience of the prophet needs to understand the ways God works. They need a theological understanding concerning why God sends the discipline of punishment. They need to be motivated to repent of their sins and reject idols. Then they will find that God will forgive their sins, have mercy on them, and defeat their enemies.

Vv. 12-13 – The Ingathering of the Outcasts

Once again Isaiah turns from punishment to promise. There will be a great ingathering of God's harvest. "In that day" connects the event with that which is described in 26:19 and following. The Lord himself shall beat off his fruit. This metaphor is taken either from the beating of the olive tree or threshing with the threshingflail. He shall harvest

[153] The fortified city is most likely Jerusalem though other cities (Babylon, Samaria, the cities of Judah) have been suggested.

from the flood of the river unto the brook of Egypt.[154] The Lord would collect within these limits all that were of Israel. Notice the great care with which spiritual Israel shall be gathered. It will not be en masse; it will be one by one.

Accompanying the ingathering will be the sounding of the trumpet[155] bringing from Assyria and Egypt those who were about to perish. They will come to Mt. Zion to worship God. The trumpet may be to call them to worship or an announcement that an atonement for sin has been provided in the perfect sacrifice to which the law points. This is surely that of which the Hebrew writer wrote (Heb. 12:22-24):

"22 but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel."

SECTION FOUR

JERUSALEM-ZION: WARNINGS AND PROMISES

Chapters 28-35

This section of Isaiah's prophecy is also called "The Book of Woes" (Delitzsch), "Oracles of Woe" (Beyer), "Human Schemes and God's Plan" (Webb), "True Deliverance Is Found Not in Egypt But in the Lord" (Young), and "The Folly of Trusting the Nations" (Oswalt). All of

[154] As usual, "*the* river" (*hannahar*) is the Euphrates (comp. Gen. 31:21; Exod. 23:31; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 24:2, 3, 14, 15, etc.). Its "strong stream," or "flood," is contrasted with the scant thread of water which was alone to be found in the "Torrens Ægypti." The stream of Egypt (*nachal Mizraim*) is generally allowed to be the modern *Wady el Arish*, which was appointed to be the southern boundary of the Holy Land (Numb. 34:5; 1 Kings 8:65).

[155] A trumpet was sounded to call an assembly together or to introduce a feast (Num 10:7, 10; Joel 2:15). The Day of Atonement was announced by loud trumpets sounded throughout the land.

these headings together provide a good insight into that which Isaiah is discussing. He pronounces seven woes against 1) the drunken rulers of Ephraim, 2) the drunken rulers in Judah, 3) Ariel (Jerusalem-Zion), 4) those who hide their plans from God, 5) the pro-Egyptian policy, 6) those who go down to Egypt, and 7) an unnamed destroyer. Interspersed throughout the woes are promises of good things to come that will be accomplished during the reign of a righteous King described in later chapters as the Servant of Jehovah.

Most commentators agree that chapters 7-12 relate to the period of Ahaz's reign while chapters 28-35 relate to Hezekiah's reign. The data in 2 Kings 18:1, 9 seems to place the beginning of Hezekiah's reign in 727 B.C. Others have different dates. For example, Thiele and those who follow his theory of accession and nonaccession years of dual dating date Hezekiah's reign from 715-686 B.C. This seems to be supported by the accounts of Hezekiah's religious reforms and the great Passover in the first year of his reign (2 Chron. 29-30. One cannot be dogmatic about either date.

The key issue in chs. 28-35 is whether Judah, epitomized by its leaders, will rely on Egypt or Jehovah in the face of the growing threat from Assyria. Chs. 30-31, which are wholly taken up with this issue, are central to this section. 31:1 succinctly states the issue: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and rely on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!"

By way of structure, chapters 28-31 contain the announcement of woes with one additional woe found in 31:1. The latter woe signifies a shift from judgment to salvation as the message of these chapters unfolds and begins to move toward its climax. The climax comes in chapter 35 (especially v. 10) with the joyful return of the Lord's redeemed people to Zion. Chapters 34 and 35 are paired, with chapter 34 telling that the land of those who have rejected the Lord is reduced to a sterile judgment under. Thus these chapters present the twin themes of judgment and salvation that have run through these chapters as a whole.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Drunkards – and the Stone in Zion

Vv. 1-6 – Woe to the Drunkards of Ephraim

Ephraim is the northern kingdom, Israel, or at least what is left of it after Assyria's invasion. Samaria, its capital, was situated at the head of a fertile valley that extended to the Mediterranean Sea. The woe here pronounced upon it anticipates its eminent fall. Assyria, though unmentioned by name, is the mighty and strong one that would come as a destroying hailstorm and an overwhelming flood. Ephraim, whose leaders staggered from wine and strong drink (vv. 1, 3, 7-8), had no chance for victory. What Assyria had already begun would be finished, all under God's direction. Still, God will protect the remnant and be to them a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty (5-6).

Vv. 7-13 – Woe to the Drunken Rulers in Judah

Almost all commentators agree that "And even these" refers to Judah. Judah, no less than Ephraim was given to indulgence with intoxicants.[156] In wicked violation of the law of God, which prohibited the priests from drinking strong drink when performing priestly service, and that on pain of death (Lev. 10:9, cf., Ezek. 44:21), they were intoxicated even in the midst of their prophetic visions (הָרֹאֶה, literally "the thing seeing," then the act of seeing). All the tables of the carousal are full, without there being any further room.

Worse yet, they mock the true prophets of God. The people's understanding had become so shallow that they could not understand the prophets' teaching. Their spiritual understanding had declined drastically.

"Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message?" The best explanation seems to be that the prophet

[156] It has been questioned whether literal intoxication is meant, and suggested that Judah "imitated the pride and unbelief and *spiritual intoxication* of Ephraim" (Kay). But the numerous passages which tax both the Israelites and the Jews of the period with drunkenness (ch. 5:11, 22; 22:13; 56:12; Hos. 4:11; 7:5; Amos 6:6, etc.), are best understood literally.

dramatically introduces his adversaries as replying to him with taunting speeches "Whom does he think he is teaching? Mere children, just weaned from their mother's milk, and taken away from the breast? Does he forget that we are grown men—nay, priests and prophets? And what poor teaching it is! What endless petty teasing—precept upon precept," etc. The intention is to throw ridicule upon the smallness and vexatious character of the prophet's interminable and uninterrupted chidings. The whole teaching is nothing but an accumulation of precept upon precept, rule upon rule, one little injunction followed up by another, here little, there a little. The objectors profess to find in the prophet's teaching nothing grand, nothing broad—no enunciation of great leading principles; but a perpetual drizzling rain of petty maxims and rules, vexatious, cramping, confining; especially unsuitable to men who had had the training of priests and prophets, and could have appreciated a grand theory, or a new religious standpoint, but were simply revolted at a teaching which seemed to them narrow, childish, and wearisome.

God's response is that he will speak to them on their level. The unintelligible speech would fall from the lips of Assyrian conquerors. The school experience is a hard one, but it is the only course open when ears are closed to God's word.

Vv. 14-22 – The Rulers' Covenant with Death and Jehovah's Foundation Stone in Zion

Having dealt with the priests and prophets, Isaiah now turns his attention to the rulers.[157] They thought that they would escape judgment. They had no fear because they had made or were about to make agreements that they thought would secure their safety. The Assyrians could do them no harm. What they failed to realize was that their covenant was with death and the grave (Sheol) and their anticipated help (Egypt, 30:1-7; 36:6-9) was a lie. Moreover, they were in David's

[157] Although Hezekiah was a "good" king, he seems to have surrounded himself with those who did not measure up to that standard on the plus side and were scoffers on the negative side.

City with God's temple in their midst. Sadly, they trusted in lies rather than in God.

God would rebuild Jerusalem, but he would rebuild it in his way (16-17). It will begin with the laying of a foundation stone, a, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation. Justice and refuge will be the plummet line[158] and hail[159] will sweep away the refuge of lies, and water will overflow the hiding place. It is there that security will be found and he that believeth will not be ashamed.[160]

The result will be that the convents will be annulled, the people will be overwhelmed by the overflowing scourge and then be trodden down. As often as it sweeps through it will destroy more of the population. "It shall be naught but terror to understand the message." This alludes to v. 9. They had scorned Isaiah's doctrine or teaching when he taught them by word of mouth. They will understand it all to well and find it "nothing but terror" when it is preached not by word but by fact (18-19).

The bed which the Jews have made for themselves is one in which they can find no comfort – the bed is too short and the cover too small (20). Moreover, Jehovah is going to rise up as in Mt. Perazim.[161] Then God was on the side of his people, but now God was to be on the side of the enemies of his people, who were to suffer as the Philistines had suffered in the olden times. This punishment of his own people by the sword of foreigners was strange work on God's part—a strange act. But it was their strange conduct that caused God's strange action. They had become, as it were, Philistines (21).

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[158] I will execute justice and judgment on the earth with all strictness and exactness.

[159] The Assyrian invasion.

[160] The LXX. has "He that believeth shall not *be ashamed*" or "*confounded*." Paul (Rom. 9:33) follows this rendering. It is conjectured that the Hebrew had originally *yâbish* instead of *yâkhish*.

[161] The "Mount Perazim" of this passage is probably the same as the "Baal-Perazim" of 1 Chron. 14:11. Where David completely defeated the Philistines by the Divine help. This victory is connected with another over the same nation in the valley of Gibeon (1 Chron. 14:13–16).

The final words of this section (22) are difficult. Isaiah calls upon them to cease scoffing because if it continues their bonds will be made strong. This does not mean that their bonds were weak, but that there will be less likelihood that they will be loosed. The reason that Isaiah gives is that he has heard a decree of destruction from the Lord upon the whole earth. Isaiah seems to be saying that there is room for repentance, but it can only affect the bonds. It cannot avoid the end that Jehovah has announced "upon the whole earth." This judgment is probably that found in chapters 24-27. It will affect the whole earth in that it issues in the kingdom. For the Jews it is the end because the theocracy is effectively over and in A.D. 70 will be literally over.

Vv. 23-29 – A Parable from Agriculture

Isaiah's warning is over, but there is still a message that needs to given to correspond to vv. 4-5 – a fringe of promise. The prophet has alarmed the scoffers, now he uses that alarm to urge repentance that he might pluck some of them out of the fire (Zech. 3:3; Jude 23). Here the consolation is wrapped up in a parable from agriculture. Isaiah first calls upon his hearers to hear his voice and attend to his words. The farmer's tasks are many but he does not do them all at once or one of them all of the time. In turn he plows, harrows, sows, and harvests, harvesting each crop with the appropriate implement. After the harvest he carefully chooses the manner in which he processes each crop. All of these tasks require knowledge. From whence did it come? It comes from Jehovah of hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

Isaiah has in his mind the wisdom of God in a higher sphere. The wise, divinely inspired course adopted by the farmer in the treatment of the field and fruit, is a type of the wise course adopted by Jehovah in the treatment of His nation. Israel is Jehovah's field. The punishments and chastisements of Jehovah are the plowshare and harrow, with which He forcibly breaks up, turns over, and furrows this field. But this does not last forever. When the field has been loosened, smoothed, and rendered fertile once more, the painful process of plowing is followed by a beneficent sowing and planting in a wisely ordered fullness of grace. Again, Israel is Jehovah's child of the threshing-floor (see Isa. 21:10). He

threshes it; but He does not thresh it only: He also knocks; and when He threshes, He does not continue threshing for ever. As soon as His purpose is attained, and the husks of sin are separated from those that have been punished, the punishment ceases, and only the worst in the nation, who are nothing but husks, are swept away by the punishments" (compare Isa. 1:25; 29:20, 21). This is the lesson and consolation taught by the parable. Jehovah punishes, but it is in order that He may be able to bless.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Woe to Ariel — and to Those Who Hide Their Counsel from God

Vv. 1-14 – Woe to Ariel

Isaiah's woe against Jerusalem consists of three elements: 1) God's siege of Jerusalem, 2) God's spiritual judgment, and 3) God's woe against those who hide their plans from God.

The meaning of "Ariel" is disputed but its identification is not. 29:8 identifies it as Mt. Zion (Jerusalem). Jerusalem's problem is that they allow feasts to come year to year but their worship is ritual for ritual's sake.[162] Isaiah describes God's coming judgment against the city (2-4). Isaiah names no invader but many associate it with Sennacherib's invasion. Mourning and lamentation would follow being ground into the dust.

Isaiah also describes the defeat of Jerusalem's enemies (5-8). As suddenly as God had brought judgment, he would bring deliverance to his people. The same theme is developed in Zechariah 14:1-5.

The ritual approach to worship (v. 1) was symptomatic of a deeper spiritual issue. The people spoke words of praise to God but their lives revealed their true hearts (13). Their worship focused on their traditions

[162] Isaiah's language in v. 1 is generally considered to be sarcastic. It is not considered as a compliment. Judgment follows.

rather than on God's revealed truth or nurturing a relationship with him.

APPLICATION: Many church-goers today also suffer from shallowness of faith. We answer roll call each time the doors are open, even for Sunday School and Wednesday Bible study. But we rarely if ever open our Bible's at home. Our only bible knowledge comes from what we hear on these occasions. If we are asked a Bible Question the best we can do is to say that "somewhere in the Bible it says . . . ." If we have a shallow relationship with God it is not surprising that we do not appreciate his word all that much. If we have not really embraced the fact that the Bible is God's word we will not really give it the respect that it is due and we will not be all that concerned about submitting to its teachings. 2 Tim. 2:15.

As a result of Jerusalem's attitude, God sent a spiritual stupor upon his people (9-10). READ THESE VERSES AND EXAMINE THYSELF (2 Cor. 13:5). Isaiah's roll is sealed so his hearers cannot read it, but even without the seal they could not read it because his hearers were not learned.

Vv. 15-24 – Woe to Those Who Hide Their Plans from God

Isaiah is about to announce a special message of deliverance for the house of Jacob (17-24). But first he deals with those who made their own plans in bold defiance of God's intentions. They thought that they could hide their conduct from God, but they could not. In fact, they totally misunderstood their place in the universe. God had made them individually and nationally. He was the potter they were the clay. They did not have God's wisdom. He knew them better than they knew themselves. They did not need to make their own plans or even include God in their plans. What they needed to do was to align themselves with God's purpose for their lives.

CLASS NOTES ON ISAIAH

LESSON FOURTEEN

Chapter Thirty

Woe to the Pro-Egyptian Policy

Vv. 1-17 – Any Alliance with Egypt Is Bound to Fail

During the years 1200-750 BC, many small independent states sprang up in the near east because no major power existed. Assyria, Babylon and Egypt were all experiencing periods of decline. Nations such as Syria, Philistia, Ammon, Edom, Moab, Phoenicia, Israel, and Judah all vied for influence and power. With the rise of Assyria around 750 BC, these smaller states faced subjugation or extermination. One of their solutions was to seek alliances with other nations.[163] Chapters 30-31 focus on this sin on the part of Judah. Jehovah wanted them to depend on him. The people, however, committed two grave errors. First, they made their own plans. Second, they silenced God's plans.

Isaiah pronounces a woe on the rebellious children who took counsel and made agreements without considering God and contrary to his will. They were heaping sin upon sin. Judah had sent ambassadors to Egypt (v. 4), but Isaiah told them that their efforts were useless and the outcome would be ruin (5-6).

Isaiah listed several animals that inhabited the Negev[164] (6-7). The animals watched as Judah's ambassadors passed by carrying their gifts with which they hoped to use to receive Egyptian support, but they carry them to a people that will not profit them. "Rahab that sitteth still" aptly describes the profit and protection that Egypt will provide Judah.

Isaiah was told to make a written record for a future witness. When it came true the people would know that Isaiah spoke from God (8). These rebellious children did not want to be confronted with their sins. A

[163] For an example, go back and review 7:1-9.

[164] The desert region of Palestine which extends from the hill country of Judah south to the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern Negev receives limited rainfall, and irrigation has helped to make it agriculturally productive and highly habitable. The southern Negev is extremely arid, and is inhabited primarily by nomadic groups.

prophet who spoke right things was not welcome. They wanted a prophet who would "speak unto us smooth things and prophesy deceits. They demand that the true prophet get out of their way so they can continue as they wish. Indeed, they insist that the true prophet get the Holy One of Israel out of their way so that he will not interfere with that which they wish to do (8-11). They mock both Isaiah's preaching and one of his favorite descriptions of Jehovah – the Holy One of Israel.

The people think that they are beyond God's reach or that he will not raise his hand against them. Isaiah does in fact tell them that the Holy One of Israel was planning a restoration and deliverance that would involve the Lord's teaching his people, bringing them blessing, and displaying his warrior power to the nations (15-17).[165]

God longed to be gracious to his people (18-19). The hardship visited on them was to lead them to repentance. Both God and the teachers he sent would teach them and instruct them to walk in the way (20-21). This would lead them to realize the worthlessness of their idols (22), and God would bring great blessings upon them (23-26).

Vv. 27-33 – Vengeance on Assyria

Accompanying this would be the display of God's strong arm against the nations (27-28). Assyria would not escape (31). Those who loved God would rejoice at his work on their behalf (29). God prepared a Topeth, a place of slaughter (cf. Jer. 19:6), for Assyria, a great fire that is kindled by God's breath.

Chapter Thirty-One

Woe to Them That Go Down to Egypt!

Vv. 1-3 – God Also Is Wise

Isaiah continues to pronounce woe upon those who persisted in seeing Egypt rather than God as the source of security. They had evaluated

[165] Notice the different results of Judah's wars when God was with them and when God was against them (Deut. 28:7, 25; 32:30).

Egypt's horses and chariots and horsemen. They were very strong, but they did not look unto or seek Jehovah. Isaiah proclaims that God is also wise and that he will arise against both the evil-doers and any help from those that work iniquity. Jerusalem needed to learn that the Egyptians were men and not God and their horses were flesh and not spirit. Jehovah will stretch forth his hand and the one who helps will stumble and the one helped will fall. They all will be consumed together.

Vv. 4-5 – God's Providence: Fierce Yet Compassionate

It is not Egypt, but God who will one day descend upon Mount Zion and protect, deliver, pass over and preserve Jerusalem.

Vv. 6-7 – Call to Repentance

Isaiah calls upon Judah to turn to him against whom they had revolted, for the day would come when they would cast away their idols that they made and by which they sinned.

Vv. 8-9 – Destruction of Assyria

No nation or group of nations would bring Assyria down. The sword of God would accomplish it. Following the Lord's victory during the days of Hezekiah (chs. 36-37), Assyria began a decline that ultimately would lead to its ruin.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Vv. 1-8 – The New Order

[Vv. 1-4 – The righteous King and spiritual illumination]

Two characteristics of the righteous kingdom stand out in Isaiah's description: 1) upright leadership, and 2) societal rejuvenation. How often had Judah's leaders let its people astray? In the new order there would be a righteous king who would have just rulers beside him (1).

He uses four similes[166] to describe the blessings that this King would provide (2). Those who were blind and could not see and those who were deaf and could not hear would see and hear. Rash decision makers would make wise decisions and those who stammered would speak clearly (3-4)

[Vv. 5-8 – Moral distinctions are now clear]

The fool and the churl would now be seen for what they were – ungodly spreaders of falsehood and error. The rejuvenation would involve not only the rooting out of the evil, but the replacing of evil with good.

Vv. 9-20 – Warning, Judgment, and Blessedness

[Vv. 9-15 – Warning to careless women and judgment to come]

The promise of Vv. 1-2 was great indeed, but first there must be days of judgment and mourning. God would deal with sin wherever he found it. Once he had done so blessing would follow.

Isaiah called the careless women of Judah to mourn. They felt secure, but within a year hard times would come.[167] The women would mourn the loss of crops and harvest, palaces and cities would disappear, and everything would seem lost (9-14).

Vv. 15-20 – Rest and Quietness at Last

The mourning will last until the Spirit is poured out from on high. The wilderness will become fruitful; justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field, bringing peace, quietness and confidence for ever. God's people will abide in peaceable habitation, in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting places (15-18).

This tranquility is abruptly interrupted by "hail in the forest" and a "city [that] shall be utterly laid. Great disagreement characterizes commentators on the identify of the "forest" and the "city." Such a

[166] The similes become more vivid when set against the Judean landscape. Wilderness and desert areas get little rain; wind blows across the wasteland; shepherds must find shelter in caves or rock crevices; streams of water are a welcome sight.
[167] This may have occurred with Sennacherib's invasion.

wide disagreement gives credence to Haley's position that the forest "perhaps" represents the great conquering military powers of the day and the "City" represents the desolated world cities, including political Jerusalem. Given the chapters that we have just studied, this seems to harmonize with the surrounding context (19). God's people in the peaceful and righteous kingdom will pursue productive occupations in the Lord. All, man and beast alike, will be devoted to the production of good. Swords will be beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks, and the nations will learn war no more. This is consistent with Isaiah's total message.

Chapter Thirty-Three

The Defeat of Assyria and Victory of Jerusalem

Isaiah's hearers were beaten down, oppressed, and felt the weight of their own sin. The entire land mourned and suffered from Assyrian domination and oppression. Did they have any reason for hope? Would the Holy One of Israel really arise on their behalf and rescue them? This message brings a strong assurance that God had not forgotten them and would act soon.

Vv. 1-6 – Woe to the Destroyer!

Assyria is not mentioned specifically but it is clear that it is in Isaiah's view. Isaiah begins by telling the destroyer that it has dealt treacherously with Israel and that when it has ceased to destroy it will be destroyed and receive as it has given (1). Then Assyria would recognize its role in the divine plan (10:7).

Israel utters a prayer for deliverance (2-4). They implore Jehovah for grace. They have waited for the One who alone could deliver them, has an arm that could protect them, and bring salvation in time of trouble. Only he can make the oppressors flee and scatter the nations. How long had God waited to hear words that he had been working to hear?

In vv. 5-6 the God who dwells on high is exalted for filling Zion with justice and righteousness, bringing stability, salvation, wisdom, and

knowledge. He has created a people whose treasure is the fear of Jehovah.

Vv. 7-16 – The Broken Covenant and the Devouring Fire

Meanwhile the land languished as it waited for God's intervention (7-9). The Lord responds to the people's lament (10). He was ready to act and he announces to Assyria what he will do unto them (11-12). He calls on those that are far off to take heed of that which he had done and on those who are near to acknowledge his might (13), and promised that fear would grip them all; who could dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? (14).

Isaiah proceeds to answer those questions (15-16). It is the one whose deeds and words are upright and who despises that which is evil. He shall dwell on high and be protected and cared for.

Vv. 17-24 – The Glory of Israel's King and Jerusalem-Zion

Lastly, Isaiah described the great day of God's restoration (17-22). His people will see the great King in his beauty[168] and a land that reaches afar. They would not face oppressive terror, pay tribute, or be overlorded by those who speak a foreign tongue. They will live in Zion that shall never be removed or plucked up. They will be in the presence of the majesty of Jehovah surrounded by the beauty of flowing streams. Jehovah will be their judge, lawgiver, king, and savior.

From the Jerusalem of the future Isaiah looks to the Jerusalem of the present. It is a ship in distress, unfit for battle. It does not sink but it is helpless. In spite of its weakness there will be great spoil to divide, even for the lame. Though in distress the city will not be destroyed because Jehovah will give victory. Looking beyond the time of weakness he sees a time of power. Sickness is healed and sin is forgiven. Step by step Isaiah has come to the ultimate conclusion – the forgiveness of sin in the reign of the Messiah.

[168] If I walk in the pathway of duty, If I work till the close of the day, I shall see the great king in his beauty, When I've gone the last mile of the way." Stanza 1 of "The Last Mile of the Way" words by Johnson Oatman, Jr., music by Wm. Edie Marks

Chapter Thirty-Four

Judgments of the Nations and Edom

Chapters 34 and 35 declare the judgment and destruction of the enemies of Jehovah and his people (34) and the redemption and glory of the ransomed (35). These chapters are not set in any particular period of history. They summarize what Isaiah has been saying.

Vv. 1-4 – Judgment of the Nations

Isaiah begins with a general call to all nations and peoples. While Judah may have been the primary audience the language used shows God's interest in those outside of Judah's borders. That interest includes God's wrath against the nations. Using the prophetic perfect Isaiah declares them destroyed and delivered to the slaughter. The Lord's victory is complete. The gruesome language emphasized total devastation. The fall of the nations will be so great that it can only be compared to a cosmic upheaval with their hosts falling like fading leaves.

Vv. 5-7 – Judgment Against Edom – A Sacrifice

Edom makes its appearance right in the middle of the prophecy. Why it appears as the first singled out by name is only speculation. Many suggest that it was because Edom was a " thorn in the flesh" for Israel and Judah over many years and it is used to represent all of the nations. All who opposed the Lord would suffer the same fate announced for Edom.

Edom had received only minor treatment in the oracles against the nations, but now it is declared that the sword of God had drunk its fill in the heavens, indicating thorough judgment, and it now descended on the land where Esau's progeny resided (5, Gen. 36:1).

God's judgment sword sliced through Edom's best as he prepared a sacrifice for himself from Edom's livestock. Bozrah, which will appear again in 63:1, was Edom's capital city. Some suggest that the reference to the oxen and great bulls may refer to Edom's leaders. Without them

society would be confounded (cf. Obadiah 8-9). The entire land would be slaughtered.

Vv. 8-15 – The Judgment: Total Desolation

V. 8 speaks of vengeance, but it is a vengeance that is concerned with administering justice or balancing the scales. It administers recompense for the cause of Zion. Isaiah describes in detail Edom's complete destruction (9-15). In short, it would become a fiery wasteland unsuitable for human habitation.[169]

Vv. 16-17 – The Certainty of This Devastation

Isaiah concludes with a challenge to his audience: seek out the book of the Lord and read. The book is not identified, but it may be the prophecies that Isaiah had already delivered. He had already called his hearers back to God's written revelation (8:19-20). Check God's word and every prophecy will have a fulfillment. So shall these. God's people could count on Isaiah's words because they were from God and God had ordered it to be so. Jehovah himself cast the lot determining that this land shall belong to wild animals. He divided it unto them by his own measuring line. It shall be thus for ever. From generation to generation they shall dwell therein.

Chapter Thirty-Five

The Way of Holiness

Isaiah is a master of contrast. In chs. 2-4 he contrasted the ideal Zion with the real Zion of his day. In chs. 9-11 he contrasted treatment of Israel and Judah at Assyria's hand against the permanence of the redeemed remnant under the Root of Jesse. Now he contrasts the desolation of the nations and Edom (34) with Zion's glorious future.

Vv. 1-4 – The New Song

[169] The language of these verses is very similar to the word's against Babylon (13:19-22). This is a suggestion that Edom represents the judgment on all the nations.

Isaiah's words change abruptly. From the judgment of ch. 34, in ch. 35 Isaiah turns to the joy of the redeemed as God brought salvation to his people. Some understand his opening words to apply to literal nature. However, given the context, they are better understood as a description of the religious life of both Jews and Gentiles as they changed from a dry desert to one that now rejoices producing beauty and moral fragrance. Not only will it blossom abundantly, it will rejoice with singing. To illustrate the spiritual beauty of Zion's redemption Isaiah turns to the magnificent beauty of Lebanon with its snow-covered peaks, massive cedars and fir trees, and to wooded Carmel and verdant Sharon carpeted with flowers. They (the redeemed) shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God (1-2).

Weak hands and feeble knees, symbols of unbelief, shall be strengthened. They shall fear no more because Jehovah will come and save them (3-4).

Vv. 5-7 – Cause for the Rejoicing

The cause for rejoicing is that the deaf shall hear, the lame shall leap, and the dumb shall not only speak, but sing.[170] There will be a great change in their lives as they are transferred from a desolate wilderness to a luxuriant garden. The glowing sand (mirage) shall now be a real pool and the wasteland that was fit only for animals shall be reeds and rushes. It was never intended that this prophecy be fulfilled in the natural world, but in the spiritual. The glory is given to Zion and is enjoyed by those who follow the Messiah.

Vv. 8-10 – The Highway

"And there shall be a highway." This is not one of two ways, one narrow and one broad. It is the highway that leads to the Zion of God – a way of holiness for travelers. It shall be called *The* way of holiness – there is no other. It is *The* highway for the remnant of his people (11:16)

[170] Some, particularly "faith healers," suggest that this indicates that miracles will always characterize Zion. While this is not the time or place to discuss this unbiblical doctrine, suffice to say that Isaiah here speaks of the spiritual healing that shall characterize the redeemed.

over which the redeemed of the nations shall travel as a united whole (19:23-24).

The highway is limited to a select few. It is *The* way of holiness for the redeemed into which the unclean (legally or morally) shall not enter. A wayfaring man though a fool[171] shall not enter. Isaiah is saying that one who despises wisdom, being wise in his own eyes and in evil instead, will not make the "mistake" of walking in *The* way (8).

The way will be safe. Ravenous beasts shall not prey on *The* way. It is for the redeemed and over *The* way the ransomed shall return and come with singing unto Zion. Everlasting joy will be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (9-10).

To quote Isaiah, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (52:7)!

Closing Thoughts on Chapters 28 – 35

1. God Desires His People to Follow His Plans

Isaiah condemned the attempted alliances with Egypt because Judah was following its own plans and not God's. Judah's future was at stake, but it was busy making ints own plans rather than seeking the Lord through his word, his prophet, and prayer.

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[171] It is sometimes argued that *The* way will be so simple that anybody can understand it. That is certainly true, but it is not supported by this passage. The Hebrew word translated "fool" is *evil* (*ewil*). It is used 26 times in the Old Testament and, unless here, it never references and inexperienced or an uneducated or unlearned person. It is used of the despiser of wisdom (Prov. 1:7), of the person for whom wisdom is too high (Prov. 24:7), of one who is foolish of lips (Prov. 10:8, 10, margin), of one whose mouth is a rod of pride (Prov. 14:3), of one whose way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 12:15), of one who is quarrelsome (Prov. 20:3), of one whose foolishness cannot be pounded out of him (Prov. 27:22), of one with whom a controversy cannot be resolved (Prov. 29:9), etc.

2. God Hates Spiritual Complacency

Judah's spiritual understanding remained at nursery-school level (28:10). They knew the words (honored the Lord with their lips), but their hearts were far away. All they knew was memorized traditions (29:13). Isaiah encouraged the people to grow in their relationship with the Lord.

God hates spiritual complacency no less today that in days of old. We must seek to grow in our relationship with him. As we yield our lives to him and trust his guidance through his word, we will increasingly be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

3. God Desires His People's Ultimate Allegiance

Isaiah emphasized that God desired and demanded their ultimate allegiance. He knew who opposed him and their day was coming. Not a single promise he made concerning judgment would fail' all would happen just as he had said. Consequently, he desired their ultimate and absolute allegiance. Nothing less would do.

Many things in life clamor for people's attention today: money, power, status, even human relationships. None of these may necessarily be bad or evil in and of itself, but the Lord desires his people's ultimate allegiance. Everything that we are and have should be viewed through the lens of their relationship with him.

4. God Has Exciting Days Ahead

God would sweep away all of those who opposed him and his people. They could count on him to judge thoroughly and with absolute fairness. But he also knew his own and would not let them down or let them go.

Isaiah foretold a day when the earth would again yield abundant crops, when holiness would reign in the hearts of God's people, and when God's glory would display itself from one end of the universe to the other, a description of marvelous spiritual revival when many of the spiritually dead would arise. Jesus would establish his kingdom, the church, the gospel would go forth, and nations would flow unto it.

God's people today are in that kingdom where they enjoy all spiritual blessings in Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

SECTION FOUR

Chs. 36-39 – Historical Link

Isaiah had fought idolatry and idolatrous leaders in Judah for almost 40 years, making every effort to turn a sufficient number to God to avoid destruction. With Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC the climax was reached and the king and others leaders besought Isaiah to implore God that they might be spared. Judah turned to God, at least temporarily. Chapters 36 and 37 deal with the conflict between Jehovah, the true and only God, and the gods of Assyria and the nations. God's victory was devastating.

There are problems with authorship and chronology in this section. 2 Kings 18-19 is almost identical with Isaiah 36-37. Delitsch and Young argue that the account in Kings is from Isaiah and not vice versa. The evidence is strong for that position. It is possible that Isaiah edited his book late in life, and that this may account for the differences between the two passages.

A more difficult problem concerns the date of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, who is mentioned in Scripture only twice, Isaiah 37:9 and 2 Kings 19:9. His age at the time of Sennacherib's siege has led some to conclude that there were two invasions and attacks on Jerusalem by the Assyrian, one in 701 BC and another sometime in the period 689-686 BC. However, because of lack of evidence most commentators accept only the invasions in 701 BC. Young concludes that the chronology is difficult and that the solution to the problems must await further light.

Another problem is that chs. 36-39 are not in chronological order. Commentators are agreed that 38-39 precede 36-37 in time. All that this means is that Isaiah had a different purpose than providing a chronological history lesson. What was that purpose? While Isaiah does not tell us, the arrangement certainly harmonizes with the two parts of his prophecy for which these chapters serve as a connection.

Chs. 1-35 focus on the time when Assyria reigned as the dominant power in the Near East. Chs. 40-66 look ahead to the time when Babylon ruled the world, specifically the time when Babylon's rule was coming to an end. Thus, Isaiah 36-37, which emphasize the Lord's defeat of Assyria, concludes the "Assyrian section" of Isaiah, while 38-39, particularly the announcement about Hezekiah's descendants serving in Babylon, anticipate the Babylonian exile, as well as the news of release from Babylon that begins in ch. 40 and introduces the "Babylonian section" of the prophecy.

Chapter Thirty-Six

The Threat to Jerusalem

Vv. 1-3 – The Emissaries Sent by Sennacherib

Hezekiah revolted against Assyria, refusing to pay tribute (2 Kings 18:7). Sennacherib responded by invading Judah and laying siege to its leading cities, concentrating on Lachish. It was from Lachish that Sennacherib sent Rabshakeh[172] to made demands upon Hezekiah. Rabshakeh stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.[173] Hezekiah sent a delegation of Eliakim and Shebna.

Vv. 4-10 – Rabshakeh's Defiant Speech

Rabshakeh made a speech characterized by pride and over-confidence. Hezekiah's emissaries were told to take a message to their king from "the great king, the king of Assyria." The basic message was that "there was no one in whom Hezekiah could or did trust who would enable him to successfully rebel against Sennacherib. Egypt was a bruised reed. Your God must be angry because Hezekiah has taken away his high places. Your best path is to surrender, make pledges to my king, and recognize that you could not win even if my king gave you 2,000 horses. After all, I have not come up against you to destroy

[172] "Rabshakeh" is not necessarily intended as a proper name. It's meaning is "field commander," and some translations so render it.

[173] This was the place to which Jehovah sent Isaiah with Shearjashub, his son, to meet Ahaz (7:3).

this land without have Jehovah on my side. In fact, it was Jehovah who told me to come up against this land and destroy it."

Vv. 11-12 – The Jew's Request

Eliakim and Shebna perhaps interrupted the speech, but in any event requested that Rabshakeh speak in the Syrian language and not in the Jew's language in the ears of the people. The request was likely made because they did not wish the men on the wall to become fearful as a result of Rabshakeh's threats. If that was the motive, Rabshakeh saw through it and continued with even greater threats, asserting that he was sent to speak to the men on the wall as well as Hezekiah and his emissaries. In fact, the men on the wall, he added, need to understand that, if they resist and war ensues, they will have to endure horribly disgusting conditions.

Vv. 13-20 – Rabshakeh's Second Speech

After that exchange Rabshakeh loudly issued an ultimatum for all to hear and understand. Do not follow Hezekiah. Do not trust in Jehovah. Do not listen to Hezekiah, but hear the king of Assyria, make peace with him, and accept the good things that he will do for you. After all, have any of the gods defeated my king thus far, and who is Jehovah that he should do any better?

Vv. 21-22 – The Report to Hezekiah

Hezekiah's emissaries followed Hezekiah's orders and answered him not a word. The rent their clothes, returned to Hezekiah, and reported the words of Rabshakeh.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

VICTORY THROUGH FAITH

Vv. 1-7 – Desperation, and an Appeal to Isaiah

Hezekiah's response to the news brought by his ambassadors was far different from the response of his father Ahaz to Isaiah. Isaiah assured Ahaz that God would deliver Judah, but Ahaz refused to believe. Heze-

kiah had no such assurance, but he mourned the news and he went to the temple of God. Additionally, he sought the help of Isaiah. He sent Eliakim and Shebna to Isaiah with a message of helplessness and futility, describing their situation as that of a woman whose time had come and who did not have strength to deliver. They entreated Isaiah to be certain that God knew the words of Rabshakeh defying the living God, asking Isaiah to pray for them. The message that Isaiah sent back to Hezekiah was one of encouragement. God's answer was there was no reason to fear the words with which the servants of the King of Assyria had blasphemed. Assyria's king would hear words, would return to his own land, where he would die by the sword.

Vv. 8-13 – Sennacherib's Renewed Effort to Persuade Hezekiah

Sennacherib did hear words. Specifically he heard that Tirhaka, Egypt's Ethiopian king, was marching against him (9). As he turned to deal with Egypt, Sennacherib sent a second message to Hezekiah advising him not to trust in Jehovah. After all, he argued, all of the other nations he had defeated had their gods and what good did those gods do them. Both he and his fathers had a long line of victories over many countries and their kings cannot be found.

Vv. 14-20 – Hezekiah's Prayer Before Jehovah

When Hezekiah received the letter he went to the temple and spread it before God, and prayed. He praised God and implored him to hear and see the defying words of Sennacherib. Hezekiah admitted that Assyria had laid waste nations and cast their gods into the fire, but they were gods of stone and wood that could be destroyed. He concluded with an entreaty to God to deliver them so that the world would know that Jehovah is God and that there is no other.

Vv. 21-29 – Jehovah's Response – An Answer to Sennacherib

Jehovah answered that prayer and it did not bode well for Sennacherib. Isaiah brought the message. God had a message of his own to the arrogant king. He had not challenged Judah; he had challenged Judah's God (23). Sennacherib had made a tactical error. The glory of Jehovah was now at stake and Jehovah would intervene on behalf of his people.

God had made the Assyrian kingdom what it was (24-26). Each of the things that the Assyrian kings had done was only fulfilling God's plan. He knew their every move and the time for their judgment had come. God would turn Sennacherib around and drive him back to Assyria (28-29).

Vv, 30-35 – A Message of Assurance to Hezekiah

What assurance did Judah have that this would happen? God would provide a sign: Judah would eat and by the third year agriculture would return to normal. Not only would there be the return of the fields and vineyards, but a remnant (Hezekiah had been concerned about a remnant[174] (4).) shall survive and surpass. The seal of Jehovah of hosts will perform these great deeds (30-32).

The Assyrian king will not come to Jerusalem. In fact, he will not even shoot an arrow there. He will take the same road home that he travelled to get here. God defended the city for his sake and for David's sake (33-35).

Vv. 36-38 – It Is Done

The Angel of Jehovah smote 180,000 of Sennacherib's army and Sennacherib had no choice but to go home. He went to worship in the temple of his god and his god could not protect him. His own sons slew him and fled. Esar-haddon, another of his sons, ascended to the throne (36-38).

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery

Vv. 1-8 – Hezekiah's Sickness and Prayer

Hezekiah had become ill with an unnamed serious disease. Isaiah the prophet came calling but with a somber message – "Set thy house in

[174] Note that there is no reference to a "righteous remnant." It is those who survive the siege. It was the "righteous remnant" that kept Judah alive, but God's use of "the remnant" indicates that more than the righteous remnant survive.

order for thou shall die and not live." Hezekiah's reaction was not one of dejection or of submission. He wanted to live and he knew just one source that held hope – he turned his face to the wall and prayed unto Jehovah. Only after reminding God of how he had walked before him did Hezekiah weep. It could have been self-pity, but it could also have been that he desired to continue to lead God's people in the right way. Whatever it was it led Jehovah to respond with a positive answer. The death declaration was rescinded and fifteen years were added to Hezekiah's life. God would also deliver Hezekiah and the city (Jerusalem) out of the hand of Assyria. Hezekiah was given a sign – the shadow on the steps was turned back ten steps.

Vv. 9-20 – Hezekiah's Psalm of Lamentation and Thanksgiving

The opening verses (9-15) described Hezekiah's feelings arising from the Lord's decree that he would die. Vv. 10-11 record what he said. He had been deprived of the residue of his years. He will be deprived of life as he has known it, including relationship with God and man. He does not know what awaits him in the unseen world. In vv. 12-15 Hezekiah wrestles with the brevity of life, but in the end he resigned himself humbly to God's purpose.

Finally, Hezekiah reflected upon the lessons he had learned through his encounter with Jehovah through Isaiah. The Lord had restored him (16-17) and Hezekiah knew that this reprieve and forgiveness was to his benefit during the additional years. Indeed, these additional years would enable him to praise Jehovah, which he could not do from the grave (19). He pledged his additional years to the praise and worship of Jehovah in his temple (20).

Vv. 21-22 – Hezekiah's Healing

Vv. 21-22 logically belong with vv. 6-7, but they appear here as the final details of the account. Hezekiah's illness apparently involved a large boil. Isaiah provided a prescription for the cure and then, in response to Hezekiah's request, provided a sign that the Lord would provide.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Not Assyria, But Babylon

Vv. 1-4 – Prophet Versus King

Sometime after Hezekiah's recovery, Merodach-baladan II[175] sent a delegation to Jerusalem bearing letters and a gift for Judah's king (1). The purpose of this visit was likely for the purpose of persuading Judah to form and alliance with Babylon against Assyria.[176] Hezekiah's response was a foolish attempt to impress his guests. He showed them everything that might impress them – silver, gold, spices, oil, weapons, and more. He showed them everything that he possessed of any kind (2).

Isaiah inquired concerning the delegation and its purpose. He asked a question that has been the title of many sermons, "What have they seen in thy house?" Hezekiah provided an honest response. He probably and correctly suspicioned that Isaiah already knew the answer.

Vv. 5-8 – The Word of Doom

Isaiah then gave Hezekiah a message from Jehovah. The day was coming when Hezekiah and his entire family and all of value in Judah would be carried to Babylon. His sons would be eunuchs in the service of Babylon's king. Hezekiah meekly accepted God's judgment. His comment that "there shall be peace and truth in my days" has been construed by some as selfish. It is just as likely if not more likely that Hezekiah was grateful for God's grace in his last days. Hezekiah's proud act had cost him his kingdom, but God delayed the Babylonian conquest for over a century.

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[175] Merodach-baladan ruled Babylon from 721 – 710 BC and again in 703 BC. During the late 8th century BC, Babylon attempted to assert its independence when it perceived Assyrian weakness. Sargon II (721—710 BC) was able to subdue Babylon, and Merodach-baladan fled into exile in Elam, where he subsequently died.

[176] Another possible cause was that Babylon was gathering information about Judah's defenses for future use in war. Even if this ere not the case, the information provided could still have been used for that purpose when Babylon did in fact attack Judah. "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts."

PART TWO

HOPE FOR TROUBLOUS TIMES

Chapters 40 – 66

CHAPTER FORTY

Introduction

"In your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society but upward to the Great Society."

President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke those words at the University of Michigan on May 22, 1964. Reading them nearly five decades later, we might wonder how the Jewish captives in Babylon would have responded to what the President said?

A *rich* society? They were refugees whose land and holy city were in ruins.

A *powerful* society? Without king or army, they were weak and helpless before the nations around them.

A *great* society? They had been guilty of great rebellion against God and had suffered great humiliation and chastening. They faced a great challenge but lacked great human resources.

That is why the prophet told them to *get their eyes off themselves and look by faith to the great God who loved them and promised to do great things for them.* "Be not afraid!" he admonished them. "Behold your God" (9)!

There is some "bumper-sticker wisdom" that says: "Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself, and be depressed. Look to God, and you'll be blessed!" This may not be a great piece of literature, but it certainly contains great practical theology. When the outlook is bleak, we need to follow Isaiah's advice to "Lift up [our] eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking." When, like Israel of old, we face

a difficult task and an impossible tomorrow, let us look up and remind ourselves of *the greatness of God.*

Vv. 1-11 – A Prologue

Vv. 1-11 are a prologue to the remainder of the book. Part One (Chs. 1-39) closed with the dark anticipation of captivity. Part Two opens with the joyous assurance of comfort and redemption. Isaiah speaks to a people who will find themselves in Babylonian captivity over a hundred years in the future. They will be oppressed under the heel of a tyrant; their beloved city will be in ruins; the temple will be destroyed.

All the major themes contained in Part Two are introduced in these eleven verses: comfort (1), atonement (2), the way of the Lord (3), the glory of the Lord (5), the power of the word of God (8), the city of God (9), and the might and tenderness of the Savior (10-11).

a) Comfort: pardon through grace (1-2)

These great verses begin with three imperatives – comfort, speak, cry (proclaim). V. 1 is the theme of the rest of the prophecy. God speaks to the remnant. There will still be threatening tones of accusation and the lightening and thunder of judgment, but above all it is the song of comfort in hope.

The keynote is struck at once. Using his favorite mode of emphasizing what is important, Isaiah declares that he has a direct mission from God to "comfort" Israel. Note the encouragement contained in the expressions, "*my* people," and "*your* God." Israel is not cast off, even when most deeply afflicted (1). He is to speak comfortably (to the heart of) Jerusalem, addressing her inmost feelings, her very spirit and soul. The words were spoken before the captivity had ended and before Judah's iniquity had been pardoned. By Divine inspiration Isaiah sees all as already accomplished and declares it as certain to God's people. Judah's captivity will come to a close; she will turn to God; her iniquity will be pardoned; she will have paid double for her transgressions (see Exod. 22:9). This language does not indicate that the law of Divine judgment is to exact double. It is to assure Judah that, having been amply punished, she need fear no further vengeance (comp. 61:7).

b) Make preparation (3-5)

The speaker here is not identified. It is not Jehovah because it is for him that the way is being prepared. The message, not the speaker, is the important thing. Ezekiel recorded the departure of Jehovah from the temple (Ezek. 11:23), and now Jehovah is returning to Jerusalem after an absence of fifty years. The language used is that used of preparing for the journey of a great king – "Make level in the desert a highway for our God" (3-4).[177] The road building is not a literal highway, but the preparation of the hearts of the people for God's return. They are to remove every barrier and fill every hindering depression so that they will be prepared for a new relationship with Jehovah for the rich outpouring of blessings that he has promised.

The glory of Jehovah will be revealed when Jehovah raises up Cyrus to deliver his people out of Babylon.[178] The remnant will go back to Jerusalem where they will settle and rebuild the temple. But a greater wonder is in store when John the Baptist came crying in the wilderness, "Make ye ready the way of the Lord (Matt. 3:1-3). He will claim to be only a voice (John 1:23) and his mission will be to introduce him in whom the glory of God will be revealed (John 1:14, 18). It was sure to happen because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (5).

c) The enduring word (vv. 6-8)

The voice said "Cry." A second voice responded, "What shall I cry?" Another voice (A third?) The answer was one that glorified the word of God. All flesh is a grass that withers and fades away, as also does the people. In contrast, the word of God will abide forever.

d) Declare the tidings (vv. 9-11)

The time of Israel's restoration has drawn nigh. The preparation has been made. The voice calling to preparation is silent. The promises are

[177] Every valley shall be exalted – see that the poor and lowly are raised up, the proud and self-righteous depressed, the crooked and dishonest induced to change their ways for those of simplicity and integrity, the rude, rough and harsh rendered courteous and mile.

[178] Isaiah foretold the event over 100 years before its occurrence.

now on the verge of receiving their accomplishment. It is fitting that some one should announce that fact to the nation. Isaiah calls on the company of prophets living at the time to do so (v. 9). They are to take up a commanding position, to speak with a loud voice, and to proclaim the good tidings to Zion, to Jerusalem, and to the cities of Judah (comp. 44:26). The terms of the proclamation are then given (vv. 10, 11). 1) He will come as a mighty one; 2) his arm will rule for him; 3) his reward is with him and his recompense before him – he rewards the redeemed and the redeemed are his reward (10). From a figure of power and rule Isaiah turns to a figure of compassion and tenderness. 1) He will feed hi flock like a shepherd; 2) he will gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom; and 3) he will gently lead those that have their young (11).

This is an appropriate way to end the prophecy that began with comfort and hope. Isaiah introduces the trials and victories that lie before the people, and foreshadows the redeeming word of God through Cyrus and ultimately through the Messiah.

Vv. 12-31 – The Incomparable Greatness of Jehovah

If captive Israel is to be induced to turn to God, and so hasten the time of its restoration to his favor and to its own land, it must be by rising to a worthy conception of the nature and attributes of Jehovah. In the remainder of this chapter Isaiah paints in glorious language the power and greatness, and at the same time the mercy of God, contrasting him with man (vv. 15–17, 23, 28–31), with idols (vv. 19, 20), and with the framework of material things (vv. 21, 22, 26), and showing his infinite superiority to each and all. In contrasting him with man, he takes occasion to bring into prominence his goodness and loving-kindness to man, to whom he imparts a portion of his own might and strength (vv. 29–31).

a) Jehovah and creation (vv. 12-14)

Isaiah exalts God for his creation with a series of questions. God has given all things in heaven and on earth their proper quantities and form and their place in the universe. Man can hardly comprehend it

much less perform it or counsel Jehovah on how it should be done. Jehovah's omnipotence and omniscience requires no counsel from his created beings.

b) Jehovah and the nations (vv. 15-17)

From exalting Jehovah as Creator Isaiah turns to exalting Jehovah as Ruler of the nations. For man, ruling over one mighty nation is a demanding task that borders on the impossible. Ruling over all of the nations is no more to God than a drop of water in a pail or a speck of dust on a scale (15). It is even impossible for man to offer adequate sacrifices to the Creator of the universe. The fire from all of the wood in Lebanon and all of the animals on earth are insufficient (16). All of the nations of the earth are nothing, even less than nothing, to the Almighty (17).

c) Jehovah and idols (vv. 18-21)

Having established that Jehovah is God and that there is no other, Isaiah now set about to arm Judah to resist the seductive power of idolatry. He does so with a series of questions. In scorn, which at times is one's most effective weapon, he laughs the idols into oblivion. To whom will you liken God or to what will you compare him (18). What is an idol – the workman casts it, the goldsmith overlays it and casts it for silver chains (19). One who cannot afford such a fine god uses wood that will not rot and seeks out a craftsman who will carve from it a graven image. If it is carved from a stump that is still in the ground it cannot even be moved (20). Isn't it amazing how absurd man can be? Let us not console ourselves that these were ignorant barbarians. The gods that we create are no less absurd!

Isaiah closes with an appeal to history. Had not Israel been warned against idolatry from the beginning (Exod. 20:4-6; Deut. 5:8-10). Time and time again they had seen the impotency of idols to deliver them from disaster. Those who, like ancient Judah, create their own idols will, like ancient Judah, live to rue such folly.

d) Jehovah and the princes of the earth (22-25)

Isaiah continues to describe the incomparable God. He sits upon the circle or dome of the earth and looks down on people and princes as grasshoppers. They are insignificant and totally dependent upon the one who stretches out the heavens like a tent, brings the princes to nothing, and the judges of the earth as vanity (22-23). The great of the earth as like the grass that withers and are blown away like stubble by the whirlwind (24). Given the frailty of man and the divine power and glory, to whom will you liken God? Where will you find one who is equal to God (25)? The only possible answer is that there is no being or creature with whom God can be compared. He transcends his creation and he and his Messiah are the sole beings in the universe who are worthy of man's worship and devotion.

e) Jehovah and the glorious assurance (vv. 26-31)

"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking" (26). There are times when man needs to lift up his eyes to the stars, not to worship them as did the ancients, nor to look for guidance as do modern astrologers, but to see behind them the face of their Creator. What wonderful language to the captives in Babylon who might be tempted to believe that their God has forgotten and forsaken them. Just as God calls the stars by name he will care for his sons and daughters.

So why do they declare that their ways are hidden from Jehovah and that they are not getting the justice that they deserve (27)? Given the divine power of Jehovah and his tender care for each individual, how can they have such little faith? Their despondency is groundless. The all-powerful Jehovah neither grows weary nor faints. He will give power to the faint, give strength to him who has no might. Men, both young and old, may and often do fail, but if they will but turn to Jehovah their needs shall be supplied – they shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

SECTION ONE

THE CONTEST BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND THE IDOLS

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

JEHOVAH'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE IDOLS

Isaiah has already spoken to God's rulership over the nations (a drop in the bucket or a speck of dust on a scale). However, it should not be surprising that a conquering nation such as Babylon might not appear so insignificant to those beneath its heel. The fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC tested Judah's faith, perhaps more than any other event in Old Testament history. Isaiah had seen and prophesied that it would happen (39:5-7). He never regarded it as calling God's sovereignty into question. Babylon, like Assyria, had a role to play in God's drama, but it was God, not Babylon, that wrote the script. As soon as Babylon had played its part, it, like Assyria, would exit the stage.

With this in mind, Isaiah addresses those to whom Babylon's imperial might must have seemed an established and unassailable fact. He sets out to convince them of two things. First, he speaks of events to come,[179] especially the rise of the Persian king Cyrus (explicitly named in 44:28 and 45:1) and assured that they are of the Lord (2-4, 25-27). Second, Isaiah wants them to know that they themselves, as the surviving remnant, are God's servants. He had chosen them and would not abandon them (8-10). Therefore, they are to see the fear that has gripped them as irrational and baseless and they are not to give in to it (10, 14).

Isaiah uses different names for God in making his points in this section. *El*, used 15 times, means "the mighty one," the personification of strength and power. *Eloah*, used once (44:8),[180] is an ancient word for God that sometimes appears in parallel construction with *Rock*. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, speaking of its use in this

[179] The rise of Cyrus was some 100 years in the future.

[180] This term is used primarily in poetic books, *e.g.*, it is used 41 times in the book of Job.

passage, says that is addresses "Yahweh's ability to protect and to help his people as a Rock sets him apart as the only true Rock." *Elohim*, which occurs 21 times is translated in various passages as "gods," "judges," and "angels." The plural form conveys may be a unique development of the Hebrew Scriptures and represent chiefly the plurality of persons in the Trinity of the godhead, conveying the unity of the one God while allowing for a plurality of persons.

Other names used in these chapters are *Jehovah* (66 occurrences), which designates him as Israel's covenant God, the "I Am," the eternally existent one (43:10). The term *LordI (*Adonai – 40:10; 48:12) emphasizes his rule over all (the KJV translation of *Yahweh* as "Lord" is confusing). *The Holy One of Israel* (which occurs 10 times) sets him in contrast to Israel's sins. As the Holy One of Israel he is Israel's *Creator* and *King* (44:21. He is Israel's *Redeemer* (six occurrences) a just God and *Savior* (43:3; 45:21) who *blotteth out they transgressions*, remembering sins no more (43:25; 44:22). These names clearly set Jehovah apart from the idols; only he can make genuine claims to these titles and to what they signify.

Vv. 1-7 – Jehovah Addresses the Nations

Cyrus is not introduced by name until 44:28, however, the allusions in these verses clearly describe Persia's leader who conquered Babylon in 539 BC. The islands or coastlands are a reference to the far-off reaches of the Mediterranean, or any place that could be reached by sea travel. These people are called to do several things: keep their silence, renew their strength (see 40:31), and come near. They are then to speak and come near together for judgment. The NIV translates the last phrase, "let us meet together at the place of judgment." *Keil & Delitzsch* translate it, "let them come near, then speak; we will enter into contest together." Isaiah seems to be calling upon those who had seen God's work to testify to it. Notice that v. 2a asks a question – who has raised up one from the east, whom he calls in righteousness to his foot? The answer comes in v. 4b – I, Jehovah, the first, and with the last,[181] I am

[181] The expressions "I am he" and "I am the first and the last" occur several times in Isaiah 40-48. They complement well the threefold emphasis of Isaiah 40-66: 1)

he. Between the question and the answer God's strong instrument is described. He subdued nations and kings as he conquered new territory. Cyrus fits within Isaiah's description. Isaiah's message is clear. What god had the power to raise up such a world leader and bless him in such a way? Only the Lord God, the deity of seemingly insignificant Judah. God had used Assyria and Babylon as his instruments of judgment, and now he would use Cyrus as his instrument of blessing (1-4).

The parallel invitation to renew strength (40:31; 41:1) is a subtle extension of the invitation to all of the earth. Unfortunately, as many people witnessed God's work, fear gripped them and they responded by seeking their own deliverance through the idols they had worshiped for generations. Craftsman teamed with goldsmiths to prepare an idol that would stand firm without tottering. Isaiah consistently contrasted the worthlessness of idols with God's all-embracing power (40:19-20; 41:21-29; 44:9-20; 46:5-7).

The people's response made no sense in light of Isaiah's proclamation of God's power. The exile proved God was God because he had predicted it. Now he was bringing his people home, using Cyrus as his instrument. And what was the response of many? They built idols. Ironically, human beings created the idols that they worshiped from materials the Lord created.

Vv. 8-20 – Jehovah Addresses Israel: What He Will Do

In these verses Isaiah introduces the theme of servanthood, a theme to which he will return often in chapters 40-66. "Servant" appears 40 times in the book of Isaiah. Only 9 occur in chs. 1-39, leaving 31 to appear in 40-66. It sometimes refers to Israel and sometimes to an individual.

God's people are in captivity for their sins; 2) the captivity proves God is God, because he predicted it; and 3) now God will redeem his people through Cyrus and in other ways. The Lord is "he," the only one with the power to make good on his promises. He is also "the first and the last," the beginning and the end of everything. He holds history in his hands; he is its source and its ultimate destination. The expressions also appear in the book of Revelation, where they describe the Lord God and his risen one, Jesus Christ.

Israel is described and as God's servant, his chosen one, and his friend. God had called Israel from the ends of the earth (9) where they had been spread in exile. The time of their restoration was at hand; therefore, they were not to fear[182] (10, 13). Their enemies would feel shame as God's intervention ended their opposition (11-13).

The label of "worm" (14) for Jacob has seemed odd to some.[183] The Holy One of Israel now appears as the one who will redeem Israel from captivity. God will even use Israel as threshing instrument of judgment and they shall rejoice in Jehovah (15-16).

The description of the Judean desert is one that those who had been there would recognize. All of that would change by the creative hand of God. While this language speaks to the return from Babylonian captivity, it also looks far into the future. Four verbs define God's purpose in providing water and trees: 1) *that they may see* – look upon, discern, and comprehend; 2) *know* – through acquaintance with Jehovah the people will become aware of and recognize truth; 3) *consider* – the Hebrew word sometimes means "to assign something to someone"; hence, they will assign to God a new position in their thinking; and 4) *understand* – they will realize who their benefactor is. God's purpose is that they, *together* as one, united as one, might realize *that the hand of Jehovah has done this*, and that the ultimate realization of their objectives will be his doing(17-20).

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[182] Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed; I, I am thy God, and will still give the aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by My gracious, Omnipotent hand. *How Firm a Foundation*, stanza 2.

[183] There are some today who refuse to sing *Alas and Did My Savior Bleed (At the Cross)* because it asks the question "Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I." It has been changed in some books, including ours, to "for such a one as I." Proponents of the change loudly proclaim, "I am not a worm." Certainly that is true if taken literally. They don't even have to proclaim it, much less proclaim it loudly. But it is not to be taken literally. Here it designates the relatively weak and powerless state in which the nation found itself apart from God's restorative work. When those who object to the original wording of the hymn have the power to save themselves I will join them in singing "for such a one as I." Until then, I will sing and urge them to sing the hymn's original words regardless of what the hymn book says. I think *THE BOOK* has it right.

The people were soon to go into Babylonian captivity as a result of their low spiritual and moral state. Return from captivity would be accompanied by a long period of subjection to foreign powers. God is surely preparing his people for the coming ordeal by assuring them that he would care for them throughout it all.

Vv. 21-29 – Jehovah Challenges the Idols: What Can You Do?

One of the major themes in chs. 40-66 is that "this captivity proves God is God, because he predicted it." This theme is strongly proclaimed in these verses.

God calls the idols into court and challenges them to make their case.[184] He calls upon them to list the things that they have declared would happen in the future. Proclaim what purpose you have had in the past and what you have done to bring it to pass so that they may be considered. V. 23 is sarcastic – do good (what you will do for your worshipers) or do evil what you will do to other nations) as you may please so that we may be dismayed. Whatever it is we can behold it together. Surely any god has a purpose for its people and can now demonstrate what it has done to bring that purpose to pass.

Jehovah has placed himself in opposition to the heathen and their gods, as the God of history and prophecy. It now remains to be seen whether the idols will speak, to prove their deity. By no means; not only are they silent, but they cannot speak. Therefore Jehovah breaks out into words of wrath and contempt. "Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you" (24).

God demands nothing of the idols that he is not willing to do. He now lays out his credentials. First, he has raised up one to bring down other rulers (25). Cyrus would do God's bidding and even call on God's name (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ez. 1:1-4).[185] The Lord had announced this plan long

[184] The Hebrew word translated "cause" ("case" in some translations) often appears in legal texts.

[185] How could Cyrus come both "from the North" and "from the rising sun"? Some think this is an error in scripture. It is not. The solution lies in recognizing both Cyrus's location and his route of travel. The Persian kingdom lay due east of Judah.

before. No one else has joined him in doing so (26). God had planned Judah' judgment and had announced Judah's restoration (27).

Both sides have presented their case; the evidence is in; the final verdict is rendered. The Lord performed his work with his people. No other deity in the universe had provided him counsel, let alone an answer to any of his questions (28). Therefore, the final verdict came down in language similar to v. 24. All idols were false, nothing! Their deeds amounted to nothing at all. Isaiah even compared their idols to "confusion," a term that was used to describe the condition of the universe prior to creation.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Jehovah's Servant and Israel's Punishment

Vv. 1-9 – Jehovah's Ideal Servant

The servant of which Isaiah spoke in 41:8 was Israel. The servant of whom he now speaks is a person. Isaiah's description of the servant included two major aspects. First, he described the servant's ministry and the servant's faithful execution of it. Second, he described the servant's Lord, who would empower him for that ministry.

a) Description of the Servants (vv. 1-4)

The servant's ministry was marked by the presence of God by whom he was upheld and who delighted in him. The Spirit of God whom God will place upon him will enable the servant. His ministry will include bringing justice to the Gentiles (1).

Second, the servant's ministry will be characterized by startling contrast (3). The contrast lay between the servant's quiet demeanor and his significant accomplishments. He did not announce his coming with loud pomp and was so gentle that he would not even crush a bruised reed or extinguish the smoldering wick of an oil lamp. Nonetheless, he would bring forth justice with perfect faithfulness. "Jus-

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However, any Mesopotamian ruler traveling to Judah would follow the Euphrates River northwest and then descend southward into the region.

tice" here does not refer to our primary use – redressing crime. It designates a society that functions according to God's design (see discussion of societal rejuvenation, 32:1-8) (2-3).

Third, the servant's ministry was marked by relentless determination (4). He would stay the course[186] until he established justice upon the earth. Even the coastlands (see comments on 41:1) would place their hope in his instructions (law), a reference to the extent of his leadership.

b) The Servant's Lord (vv. 5-9)

God is speaking. The creator God who made the earth, all that is in it and all that comes from it, the One who gives breath to the people whom he created and gives the spirit to walk upon the earth created for them, fully endorses his servant (5). Moreover, that God pledges to support his servant. His ministry shall be in righteousness, God will hold his hand and keep him, and he shall be a covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles (6).[187] The covenant and the light would bring special blessings – the blind would see and captives released from prison (7). By now we have learned that this language describes the spiritual blessings that will come with the Messiah.

Who had planned his servant's special ministry? It was the Lord himself (8). His very name, *Yahweh*, emphasized his presence with his people. Jehovah would not share his glory with another. He and only he had proclaimed the events that now had happened, and he continued to announce the new things that he would do (9).

Vv. 10-17 – A New Song of Praise to Jehovah

[186] Isaiah writes, "he will not fail." All of this language clearly speaks to the coming of the Messiah and his public ministry recorded in the New Testament. Premillennialists assert that Jesus came to establish a kingdom, but failed because the Jews rejected him and he could not accomplished what he was sent to do. God, speaking through Isaiah, says that he would not fail. Which will you believe?

[187] The latter two phrases are parallel. The servant will mediate God's special covenant relationship with his own; he will shine the light of God's truth on peoples who had not yet experienced it.

The remaining themes of ch. 42 are triumph, judgment, and indictment. God had triumphed and deserved his people's praise (10-13). Yet God had judgment left to administer to those who persisted in idolatry (14-17). Finally, God chastised his wayward servant, describing the sin that had led to the exile (18-25). The first two themes are covered in these verses.

The good news of 42:1-9 led to Isaiah's command to "sing unto the Lord a new song (42:10). The inclusion of "the end of the earth" as well as "coastlands" (those that go down to the sea, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof) once more emphasizes the intended extent of God's kingdom and that more than Judah's return is included (10). All of these should praise God, including the villages that Kedar inhabits.[188] They are all to unite is give glory to Jehovah and declaring his praise (11-12).

One of the reasons that they should give him glory is that God will go forth as a warrior and his triumph over his enemies was certain (13). He has held his peace for a long time and refrained himself, but now he will cry out like a woman in labor (14). He will make waste, destroy, and dehydrate the land of his enemies (15). But those who trusted in him he would lead and never leave (16). Those who persisted in idola-

[188] Kedar is a confederation of Arab tribes based in the north Arabian desert. In Gen. 25:13 and 1 Chron. 1:29 Kedar is one of the twelve sons of Ishmael. The Kedarites were a major force from the late eighth century b.c. until the rise of the Nabateans in the fourth century b.c. and are frequently mentioned in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian sources. They raided lands on their eastern and western borders and controlled the eastern trade route from Arabia to the Fertile Crescent. The later extent of their influence is illustrated by a silver bowl dated to the fifth century b.c. from modern Tell el-Maskhuta in the eastern Nile delta dedicated to the goddess Han-Ilat by 'Qaynu the son of Gashmu the king of Kedar'; this Gashmu is the same as 'Geshem the Arab' of Neh. 2:19 and 6:1.
In the Bible the military might of the Kedarites is indicated by reference to their archers and warriors (Isa. 21:16-17). Thus, although they dwelt in the eastern desert in dark tents (Isa. 42:11; Jer. 2:10; 49:28; Ps. 120:5; Song of Sol. 1:5) and were herders (Isa. 60:7; Jer. 49:29), their 'princes' traded with Tyre, which lay on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea far to the north and east (Ezek. 27:21). Their being singled out in Isaiah and Jeremiah as objects of oracles shows their importance and corresponds to what is known of them from nonbiblical sources.

try would experience shame and devastation. Their molten images cannot help them and those who bow before them are an abomination (17).

Vv. 18-25 – Israel, Jehovah's Blind and Deaf Servant, to be Punished

Isaiah's words against God's servant (18-20) appear startling in light of the glowing description earlier (42:1-4). How could the servant in whom God delighted now be described as blind and deaf to the things of God (18-19)? How could the servant see but pay no attention, have open ears but hear nothing (20)?[189] The answer is found in Isaiah's fluid use of the term "servant." In Isaiah 41:8 and here Israel is called God's servant. In 42:1-9 the servant is an individual. Note that the servant in whom God delights comes in between God's promise to his servant Israel that God and his power will be with them to provide strength to do his will (41:8-14) and this passage in which his servant Israel continues in disobedience and rebellion, while rejecting God's ideal servant who will come one day and bring justice to all the earth (42:1-9). By refusing God's law they have made themselves the object of plunder and captivity with no one to defend or deliver them (2-22.

Israel had not become plunder of its own accord or by a fluke of history. The Lord had brought judgment upon them for their sin, but they still did not realize it. Not one considered that God had brought their suffering in order to turn them back to him.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

"Ye Are My Witnesses. . . . Besides Me There Is No Savior

Vv. 1-7 – A Renewed Promise to Israel of Deliverance and Protection

A Message of restoration seems unexpected following the strong language of 42:18-25. Isaiah not only follows with language of restoration; he connects it to the prior language with the introductory "but now."

[189] Note the close parallel with the language of 6:9.

The sudden change to consolation is significant. God tells Israel/Jacob that it should not fear because he has redeemed it. The language emphasizes that the redemption is not the result of any act on their part but is the result of God's grace. His promise to be with them confirms that they will be redeemed in the midst of trials (1-2). If God will preserve them through fires and floods, he could and would preserve them through lesser tribulations.

For the first time in the book of Isaiah, God refers to himself as his people's Savior. It is a title that will appear again (43:11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8). God's salvation included Judah's physical deliverance from Babylon, but also a relationship with him. The Lord's judgment on his people was over and now he would judge others (3-4). He would gather his sons and daughters from every direction and their homecoming would being him glory (5-7).

Vv. 8-13 – A Fresh Challenge to Israel and the Nations

V. 8, blind eyes and deaf ears, parallels 42:18-19. God summoned his people to testify to nations and peoples who also assembled at his command (9). God repeats his earlier questions (41:22-23, 26). The God who could demonstrate his ability to guide history was alone the true God and Savior. Even though blind and deaf, God's people could be his witnesses. They had in their history experienced God's deliverance and could declare his power to deliver again (10).

God declared his sovereignty and his singularity. No other Savior existed and his people were to testify to that fact. No other god could rescue and save his own as Jehovah had done. Once more it is declared that the captivity and the deliverance prove that he was God because he had prophesied and predicted both (11-13).

Vv. 14-21 – Jehovah's Power to Remove Obstacles in Redeeming His People

God's redemption of his people implied judgment on Babylon that is here described. The Babylonians would flee along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in a futile attempt to escape (14). Could God really fulfill

his promise? Undoubtedly! He was Jehovah, the Holy One, the Creator of Israel and its King (15).

Isaiah reminded his people of God's amazing work during the exodus from Egypt (16-17). But they were not to dwell on the past because their Lord was about to perform a new thing[190] among them (18-21).

Vv. 22-28 – Israel's Indifference – Jehovah's Grace

In spite of God's declarations and promises, his people were not yet ready to seek God through repentance. Indeed, they were weary of God. They did not offer sacrifices to implore his favor. Their continued conduct had wearied God (22-24).

Nevertheless, the sustaining power of divine love is greater than the gravitating force of divine wrath. God has blotted out their transgressions, a phrase designed to impress upon them that God's act is in no way merited but is a sovereign act of his absolute freedom. The expression "for my own sake" declares that the act has its foundation only in God (25). Israel had been sinful from the beginning, but the remnant had to be returned for God's sake. It was essential to his purpose and plan.

God now takes them to court and calls upon them to bring forth evidence of any merit that they had to establish their justification and to receive his blessing. Their first father[191] sinned. Their teachers (prophets, priests, and others who should have given proper instruction in the law) transgressed against God (26-27).

Nonetheless, the people are still responsible for their sins. Side by side with the false prophets and teachers were God's faithful prophets,

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[190] In speaking of his work through the ideal Servant God had said, "New things do I declare; before they spring forth [sprout] I will tell you of them" (42:9). These things are in the distant future. The "new thing" presently in view is more immediate: "now shall it spring forth." The generation addressed will share in it.

[191] Commentators have suggested that this refers to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, or even David. Jacob is perhaps the one in view. He was in the line of those who received God's promises (land, seed, and nation), and he stepped into that line by deception, not having been the first-born.

whom the people not only refused to hear; they also killed them (Matt. 23:29-35). Eventually God will make Jacob a curse (consign him to destruction) and Israel a reviling (an object of abusive speech) (28). Although this judgment was in part fulfilled by the Babylonian captivity, the curse and reviling have continued throughout the history of Israel. Some say it was finally fully fulfilled in A.D. 70 while others say that they continue to live under the ban.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

The Folly of Idolatry

Vv. 1-5 – Israel's Blessings in Spite of the Curse

Isaiah begins with the words, "Yet now, hear," indicating a connection with what has preceded. What has preceded is a ban and a curse under which Jehovah has placed the nation. In spite of that, Jehovah still has a blessing for Jacob, his servant, whom he had chosen (1). Given Jehovah's relationship with his "child," he tells them once more not to fear (2) because the Lord will bring abundant blessings upon them, including the pouring out of his Spirit (3-5).

Vv. 6-8 – Israel's King – The Only God

God's sovereignty and singularity is again set forth (6) and God boldly challenges any would-be rival to speak up regarding events either past or present (7). Once more God assures his people that they need not fear which is something that they should know based on his past care and deliverance to which they (and their fathers) are witnesses (8).

Vv. 9-20 – The Shame and Folly of Idolatry

The uniqueness of God having been set forth, Isaiah now turns to the images and the image-makers, overwhelming them with his scorn and ridicule (compare Jer. 10:8-10). They that make graven images are vanity.[192] Those who worshipped them revealed their own ignorance and acted to their own shame (9). With that introduction Isaiah proceeds

[192] Once again Isaiah uses the term *tohu*, which together with *bohu*, describes the primitive chaos in Gen. 1:2.

to illustrate the futility of idolatry with a detailed description that included the idol's creation and ended with the worshiper falling before the idol (12-20). The almost comical portrayal brought home the depth of the people's spiritual blindness.

Vv. 21-23 – Pardon and Praise

Israel, having been exhorted never to forget the impotency of idols ("Remember these things."), is promised forgiveness and deliverance (21-22). Then, heaven and earth are called upon to join in rejoicing over the announcement (ver. 23).

Vv. 24-28 – Cyrus the Deliverer Is Named

Before naming the coming deliverer, Jehovah again declares his own eternal greatness on which the fulfillment of the prophecy rests. The list of the characteristics and accomplishments of God's greatness contains such matters as creation (24), frustration of the signs of liars, making diviners mad, turning wise men backwards, and making their knowledge foolish (25). He confirmed the word of his servants and messengers and predicted the inhabitation of Jerusalem and the building up of the cities of Judah (26).

V. 27 has divided commentators. Some say that it is a reference to the dividing of the Red Sea that allowed Israel to pass through on day land, and to the crossing of the Jordan, which "rose up in one heap" (Josh. 3:16), providing dry ground on which the Israelites could cross. Others contend that it is a reference to the taking of Babylon when Cyrus diverted the flow of the Euphrates River in such a way that he was able to use the dry riverbed as a passageway under the wall into the city. A third group hold that Isaiah is speaking metaphorically of God's power to overcome all obstacles that might stand in opposition to the carrying out of his will; there are no obstacles that he cannot remove. This third rule seems to be preferable. It certainly fits into the context of God's declaring that which he will do to accomplish his purpose and is consistent with the list of his characteristics, accomplishments, and singularity (24-26) that were described to support his power to do that which he said he would do.

Having declared his purpose proclaimed his power to accomplish it, he identifies by name the instrument which he would use to accomplish that purpose – Cyrus will act as God's shepherd, seeing that Jerusalem and the temple are rebuilt and his clock restored to their homeland. The naming of Cyrus is more than a century before the event. Many modern theologians find such prophecy to be a stumbling block. Being unable to accept the supernatural, they redate this part of the prophecy to the time of Cyrus.[193] The truth is that it is no more difficult for a

[193] *The Pulpit Commentary* makes a cogent statement concerning this prophecy.
"The mention of Cyrus by name, here and again in ch. 45:1, has no doubt been one of the main grounds on which has been set up the theory of two Isaiahs. It has been thought incredible, or at any rate contrary to the analogy of prophetical revelation, that so minute a matter as the name of a man should have been announced in prophecy more than a century before his birth. There is, however, the parallel case of Josiah, who, according to the author of the Books of Kings, was announced by name more than three centuries before his birth (1 Kings 13:2). And there are the extremely minute facts noted in Dan. 11 which were prophetically declared from two centuries to three centuries and a half before they happened. It is, perhaps, assuming that we know more than we really do know about the object and laws of prophetic utterance, to lay it down that there can be no minute prophecy except when the prophet is living in the midst of the events. It is certainly a very marvellous thing that Isaiah, living at the close of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh century B.C., should mention a king by name who did not ascend the throne till the middle of the sixth; but no one can suppose that God could not have made such a revelation to him if he pleased. An attempt to minimize the marvel, without postulating two Isaiahs, has been made by the supposition that "Cyrus" was not really a proper name, but an old title of the Persian (Achæmenian) kings, signifying "the sun," and that Isaiah, therefore, only meant to point out Persia as the power which would destroy Babylon, which he had already done in effect in ch. 21:2. But, in reality, there is no sufficient ground for either of the two statements (1) that Cyrus meant "the sun," and (2) that it was an old titular name of all the Persian kings. That "Cyrus" meant "the sun," rests upon the weak authorities of Plutarch and Ctesias, and has been disproved by Sir H. Rawlinson ('Cuneiform Inscriptions,' vol. ii. p. 112). That it was an old titular name of all the Persian kings is directly contrary to the evidence. Out of fourteen Achæmenian kings, two only bore the name; and they bore it as their one and only personal appellation. It was also borne by an Achæmenian prince who had no other name. It is as purely a proper name as Cambyses, or Xerxes, or Darius. The theory of Dean Plumptre ('Biblical Studies,' p. 195) must therefore be set aside as untenable, and we must face the fact that the great Cyrus, who reigned from b.c. 559 to b.c. 529, is mentioned in prophecies attributed

God-inspired prophet to proclaim the future 150 years before the event and no more amazing than proclaiming the future 6 months before the event. Even assuming that Cyrus had conquered Babylon when the prophecy that related to Cyrus was made, how would Isaiah have known that Cyrus would allow the Jews to return and that Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt? Modern theologians would assert that Isaiah could not have known that either and resolve the problem by moving the date another 6 months. Sadly, they cannot reject the existence of the supernatural without rejecting the God of the supernatural. More sadly, the God of the supernatural will reject them. After all, is that not what he did with his own children who rejected him?

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

"Unto Me Every Knee Shall Bow"

Vv. 1-7 – Jehovah Addresses Cyrus: His Mission

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed."[194] This direct address of God to a heathen king is without parallel in Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Abimelech, were warned through dreams. Nebuchadnezzar was even promised Divine aid (Ezek. 30:24, 25). But no heathen monarch had previously been personally addressed by God, much less called "his anointed," and spoken to *by his name* (ver. 4). Three motives are

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to a writer whose death cannot be placed much later than B.C. 700. The name which the Greeks expressed by and the Romans by "Cyrus," is in the original Persian *Kurush*, in the old Babylonian *Kuras*, and in the Hebrew *Koresh*.

[194] *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* comments on the use of "anointed" in relation to Cyrus: "A much discussed point is the mention of Cyrus, a non-Israelite, as the Lord's anointed *(limshîḥô*, Isa 45:1). If מָשִׁיחַ is envisioned as an ideal king, godly and upright, then the designation of "anointed" causes difficulty, for Cyrus was a worshiper of Marduk and other pagan deities. Yet Cyrus was the Lord's appointee for a definite task. The Isaiah passage suggests that מָשִׁיחַ be understood as one singled out or "chosen" (בָּחַר q.v.) for a task, characteristically one of deliverance—a deliverance of Israel from their Babylonian captors returning them to their homeland.

As for the king, that task centered on a righteous rule in the context of grace included in which was deliverance from oppression. Saul, the first king, in his first major encounter exemplified the qualities of a מָשִׁיחַ (1 Sam 11).

mentioned for this special favor to him: (1) that he might acknowledge Jehovah to be the true God (2-3); (2) that Israel might be benefited and advantaged by him whom God had girded to provide strength for Cyrus' task (4-5); (3) that the attention of the whole world might be attracted, and the unity of God made manifest far and wide (6). Jehovah can accomplish his will because of his power, which includes forming light and creating darkness, bringing prosperity and creating disaster. By that power Babylon will go from light to darkness and from prosperity to disaster while Medo-Persia does the opposite (7).

Vv. 8 – Heaven's Cooperation Invoked

Heaven and earth are called upon to join the glory of Israel's redemption and restoration. Righteousness is to rain down and salvation is to spring up. Righteousness will grow. It is the Lord's creation or accomplishment. Once they returned, however, although idolatry in Israel was abolished to a great degree, the results were disappointing. Israel's failure after the return is recorded in the prophetic books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah; and Daniel's prophecy of events to occur between the covenants (chs. 10-12). The commands in this verse were not fully carried out until the coming of the ideal Servant.

Vv.9-13 – Jehovah's Response to Israel's Complaint

There would be some who were defiant and these verses pronounce woe upon them. The clay does not question the work of the potter, and newborns do not talk back to their parents (9-10). In the same manner, God's children do not question his work or give him orders about the work of his hands. After all, it was God who made the earth and created man, stretched out the heavens and filled it with stars. In the same manner he will raise up Cyrus who will accomplish God's work and that without price or reward (11-13).

Vv. 14-17 – The Effect of Israel's Redemption upon the Gentiles

As said before (43:3), Egypt, Cush, and the Sabeans would fall before them in defeat. Idol makers would experience shame, and Israel will be saved forever.

Vv. 18-25 – Jehovah's Purpose in Creation

The Lord, the Creator has spoken openly, never in secret, and had accomplished everything that he said he would (18-19). This includes making the earth to be inhabited. While this is probably not what Isaiah had in mind since the science was unknown to him, the One who gave him the language by inspiration did know that even small changes in the position of earth in its galaxy would make it uninhabitable by mankind.

Idolaters are reminded that their gods cannot save them. Only he, the righteous Savior, who holds past, present, and future in his hands, can do so (20-21).

Using language that Isaiah's audience must have found surprising, the prophet called upon the whole earth to turn to Jehovah and be saved (22). Every knee would bow before him, every tongue would swear allegiance, and only in him would they find righteousness and strength (23-24).

"All the descendants of Israel" may include all of those who cast their lot with the Lord (Gal. 3:29), but it may also simply highlight Israel's special blessing among the redeemed.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Jehovah and the Gods of Babylon

Vv. 1-2 – The Shame of Babylon's Gods

Chapters 46 and 47 reveal the impending doom of Babylon. Cyrus's call and mission have been set forth, and now Jehovah is ready to make known the fall of the great heathen city. Isaiah begins by describing the impotence of her gods.

Isaiah begins abruptly. His opening descriptions may have been an allusion to the Babylonian New Year Festival. It normally lasted eleven days and all major deities of the Babylonian pantheon were brought to Babylon to participate in a grand parade. However, the event that Isaiah described sounded far from grand. His mocking language described

the idols as stooping and bowing and utterly humiliated. Even the animals that pulled the wagons seemed to feel the burden of their worthless load (1-2). The gods did not look like rules; they looked more lie the defeated spoils of war.

Vv. 3-11 – The Glory of Israel's God

Isaiah now turns to addressing the remnant of God's people. He reminds them of their relationship with God from birth to old age, and repeats God's promise to carry and deliver them (3-4). Instead of carrying their gods like the Babylonians did their idols, their God has carried them.

This lead to two rhetorical questions designed to emphasize the glory of God. There was no way in which God was comparable to the Babylonian gods bowing and stooping down, having been hoisted onto wagons on which they were lugged about. They couldn't move on their own; they couldn't speak; when their subjects cry out for help, there is none (7).

God is unique. All Israel needed to do realize God's nature was to be men and remember their past. Not only had he created, delivered, and carried them, he had declared the end from the beginning, even from ancient times. His counsel, will, and pleasure had been and would be done (8-10).

Knowing that God's counsel, will, and pleasure had always been accomplished, they could be assured that what he was now promising, the coming of a bird of prey, one named Cyrus, would in fact happen and Babylon would be no more (11).

Vv. 12-13 – Salvation Is Drawing Near

Many of his people stubbornly refused to believe the God would bring them home. Their evil lives were far from the righteousness to which God called them (12). Nevertheless, he would bring his righteousness to the very people who had walked away from it. This does not say that God will overlook their unrighteousness. Rather it is God's righteousness that governs his every act. Salvation will follow, a salvation

from captivity (13). Salvation from sin will flow from Zion to which those saved from captivity will return. There they will receive it based upon repentance and turning to the Lord (Luke 24:47).

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Jehovah's Judgment Pronounced on Babylon

Vv. 1-7 – The Humiliation of Babylon

Having described the humiliation of Babylon's deities, Isaiah turns his attention to Babylon's downfall. Babylon was ancient. The tower erected at Babel, forerunner of Babylon (Gen. 11:1-9), was an expression of man's desire to have his own god and a religion molded after the imagination of his own heart. The Babylon of Chaldea was of the same mold, symbolized by haughtiness and cruelty of man without God. John could find no greater illustration of Rome than ancient Babylon. John's Babylon became a permanent symbol of all that is lustful, seductive, and enticing—all that appeals to the flesh. Each of the Babylons has been brought to an end by divine judgment. God rules in history.

Feminine imagery describes the city. Two imperatives are used to taunt it. "Sit in the dust" and "sit on the ground without a throne." It is described as a virgin, an unlikely name for such an evil city. However, the term may indicate the fact that it had not been violated by an alien army at this point in its history. Her days of being "tender and delicate" (see Deut. 28:56) were over, the consequence of profligate living (1).

Isaiah uses the language of captivity to describe that which Babylon would experience. It would be inflicted with the treatment that it had inflicted on others. Their nakedness would be exposed. They would be stripped of their power, wealth, and glory. Jehovah would accomplish this and bring to a close "the mistress of the kingdoms" (2-5).

God gave Israel into Babylon's hand ("profaned mine inheritance") because of his anger with his sinful and rebellious people. Babylon was God's instrument of judgment, but it overstepped its prerogatives by its arrogance and pride (vv. 6-7).

Vv. 8-11 – Babylon's Blasphemous Claims and Their Consequences

Years of supremacy led to a false sense of security by Babylon (cf. Dan. 4:29-30). When Persia defeated Babylon in 539 BC it may have been taken totally by surprise (see Dan. 5). The NIV's "lounging in your security" conveys the complacency and false confidence apparent. Babylon's arrogance culminated in its boast, "I am, and there is none else besides me" (v. 8)—almost exactly what the Lord and said of himself (45:22). Babylon was confident that widowhood would never come upon it, but the Lord declared that desolation would come upon them "suddenly" and "in a moment in one day" (8-11). This is a lesson for all time (1 Thess. 5:3).

Vv. 12-15 — The Failure of Babylon's Occult Arts

Finally, Isaiah warned Babylon to brace itself for the inevitable. He mockingly invited the people to persist with their spells and sorceries, as if these would save them. Those who consulted the heavens would find nothing there that would save them, let alone the people of the kingdom..

Isaiah's message to Babylon brought home what every nation on earth needed to understand. Nations ruled only by God's grace, and when they had served his purpose, he would bring them down. He would judge their sin and those who mistakenly thought their own wisdom or strength had attained their lofty positions would receive the due penalty of their arrogance.

The universe would have only One who would remain to say, "I am, and there is no one besides me" (8). The Lord of Hosts is his name.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Assurance of Deliverance

Vv. 1-11 – Rebuke of Israel's Hypocrisy and Stubbornness

This chapter concludes this section, which has dealt primarily with Jehovah's controversy with the heathen idols, his plan involving Cyrus, and the destruction of Babylon. His purpose has been twofold: to

strengthen Israel's faith in him and to show the folly of worshiping or fearing idols, for they are impotent and the gods the represent are nonentities.

Isaiah focused on three aspects of Israel's stubbornness. He reminded the people of 1) their election, 2) detailed their sin, and 3) God's faithfulness.

The people are addressed as the "house of Jacob who are called by the name of Israel," indicating that they were characterized more by the deceit of Jacob than by God. They came forth out of the waters of Jacob, a reference to their origin. They called on God, but they did not call in truth and righteousness (see Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9). They took oaths in God's name and prided themselves on their being citizens of Jerusalem, but their actions betrayed their sinful hearts (1-2).

Israel had no excuse because God had declared long before of impending judgment. He gave them space to repent, called them through the prophets, all to no avail. They could not say that their idols were responsible because it was God who had told them what would happen if they continued in their sinful ways. But their hearts were stubborn. God did withhold judgment for his name's sake and for his praise, but eventually judgment came. (3-9).

The exile became a time of refinement. God used his people's affliction to test and strengthen them. Paul and James recognized the potentially good side of afflictions and trials (Rom. 5:2-4; Jas. 1:2-4). God was protecting his glory and he would not share his glory with another (10-11).

Vv. 12-16 – Jehovah's Faithfulness

God again proclaimed and called upon his people to hear that he was the first and the last. He was the source of everything that existed; he was the end toward which history moved. He created the universe and it responded to his direction (12-13). Once more he challenges false gods. Who among all of them had foretold everything that he done? No one? God has declared that his chosen servant whom he loved, Cyrus, would bring Babylon to an end. Moreover, that which God had declared was not spoken in secret (14-16).

Vv. 17-22 – What Might Have Been and What Will Be

The exhortation is now continued. Israel is to learn the incomparable nature of Jehovah from the work of redemption thus prepared in word and deed. The whole future depends upon the attitude that Judah henceforth has toward His commandments.

Isaiah stressed the Lord's authority. He is their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. He is Jehovah their God who teaches them and leads them in the right way. (17) If they had listened to his commandments things would have been different. Instead of affliction they would have had peace like a river and righteousness as the waves of the sea. Their descendants would have been innumerable; their name would not have been cut off and destroyed from before God (17-19).

Once more Isaiah goes from judgment to promise. His joyful announcement of God's redemption recalled the days of deliverance from Egypt and the care that God provided so that they thirsted not in the desert. He would do so again for those traveling homeward from Babylon (20-21).

With abrupt change Isaiah gives a final warning – there is no peace for the wicked. During the days of the wilderness wanderings, God displayed his power and care for his people in many ways, but many nonetheless refused to place their faith in him. Those who persisted in their rebellion ultimately perished. Isaiah's warning to the wicked reminded his hearers that God's blessing was linked to his people's faithfulness.

SECTION TWO

THE SERVANT AND THE GLORY OF ZION (49-57)

In Section 1 (40-48), Isaiah dealt with the contest between Jehovah and the heathen idols; Cyrus, the anointed of Jehovah, who would deliver Israel from captivity; and the fall of Babylon. In doing so, he also expounded on the majesty of Jehovah and Israel's relationship to him as his servant and witness in the midst of a heathen world. These subjects now fade into the background and in this section Isaiah sets forth

the character, mission, and achievement of the divine Servant, and the glory of redeemed Zion.

LESSON 17

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

THE SERVANT AND DESPONDENT ZION

Vv. 1-4 – Endowments for His Work

The first issue in this chapter is the identification of the speaker. There is a long list of suggestions from whom to choose: the Lord's servant, Israel; Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40-55); Ideal Israel, realized in Jesus Christ; the faithful in Israel who reach their ideal in the Christ. (This choice requires as least two things: 1) the Servant of ch. 53 must be a person, and there must be a development in the Servant passages from a) the nation to b) Israel within Israel (the few) to c) a person who can be none other than the Messiah).

The greatest number of commentators, especially conservative commentators, holds that the Servant is the Messiah. While the decision should not be made based upon the number lined up on each side, it seems rather clear that the speaker is in fact the Messiah. A study of the four primary passages that deal with the Servant indicates that *Servant* is not a collective noun, but is a reference to an individual, and that only the Messiah fulfills the prophecies. The second of the "Servant Songs (49:1-13), for example, presents the Servant as an individual with a worldwide mission of redemption.

Since the beginning of ch. 43 Israel alone has been addressed. Now that the mission of the Servant of Jehovah s to be treated of, all the world must be summoned to hear, for all of the world is directly interested. Isaiah could not have said this of himself, for his "call" took place when he was of mature age. But Christ was designated for his office from the womb (Luke 1:31–33). He was also still "in the womb of his mother" when the name of Jesus was given to him (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31) (1).

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "the Word of God" generally "is … sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow" (Heb. 4:12). Christian experience testifies that this keen, searching, cutting power attaches in a special way to the sayings of Jesus, which pierce the heart as no other words can do, and rankle in the soul, which is quite unable to forget them. The imagery recurs in the Revelation of St. John (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). Not only has Jehovah provided weapons, he has provided protection — "in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." This may refer to keeping him safe from his enemies, reserving him until the fullness of time, or both. The polished shaft is a weapon keener than a sword. It is smoothed and polished to enable it to pierce more deeply. It is kept in God's quiver until the time came when it could be launched with most effect against the hearts of the ungodly (2).

Here the Servant is called "Israel." Does this mean that those who identify the Servant as one or something other than the Christ are correct? The answer is "no." First, the following verse indicates otherwise. Second, "Israel" is not limited to the name of a nation. In fact it was first used as the name of a person. It is appropriately applied to the Messiah who represents everything that Israel, the nation, should be. Third, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* writes: "There are also passages in which the servant is differentiated from actual Israel and has a mission to Israel (Isa 49:1–9; 42:1–7; 50:4–10; 52:13–53:12). This servant must be identified with the Israel-servant, but he must also be distinguished from them, having a mission to them (as explicitly stated in 49:5–6; cf. 49:3)." Fourth, It was not unusual for the king of a nation to be known by the nation's name. The Christ was to be and is the King of spiritual Israel. Isaiah had done so earlier with the King of Assyria (10:5). Addressing the King of Assyria he said, "Ho, Assyrian." There is some disagreement as to whether that appellation relates to a particular king or all of Assyria's kings, but either way it illustrates the use of a nation's name applied to its king. Fifth, Israel personified is not the speaker in this passage, as indicated by the use of "I shall glorify myself" in close connection with "servant." Sixth, Young argues that "[i]t is the servant character of Israel that brings glory to God. To be God's

servant is the highest privilege, and it is in performing the work of servant that God is glorified. This could hardly apply to the recalcitrant, sinful nation, for this nation was unable to be the true Israel. All that the prophet writes concerning Israel makes clear that they could not to be the true Israel. All that the prophet writes concerning Israel makes clear that they could not be what the Servant of the Lord should be. When the servant accomplishes his task, God is glorified; the empirical Israel could not accomplish that task; hence, whatever be the force of *Israel* here, it is not merely a designation of the nation." Following other comments, he concludes, "Israel, therefore, is the Messiah conceived as the Head of His body, the true Church, although the emphasis at this point falls upon the members of the body."

The Servant had momentarily desponded, seeing the small results of all his efforts to reclaim Israel, and had felt a natural human regret at so much labor apparently expended in vain; but his despondency had been soon checked by the thought that God would not suffer any "labor of love" to be wholly in vain, but would give it the recompense which it merited. The verse brings strongly out the true humanity of the "Servant," who feels as men naturally feel, but restrains himself, and does not allow his feelings to carry him away. Compare with this despondency the grief exhibited by our Lord on two occasions (Matt. 23:37; John 11:35), and the depression which extorted from him the memorable words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matt. 27:46).

Vv. 5-7 – The Enlarged Mission

Jehovah answered the Servant in what may have been an unexpected way. He had originally sent him "to bring Jacob again" and "that Israel be gathered unto him." Now he adds to that charge that "[he] will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles." The purpose was "that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (5-6). Unfortunately, the Servant will not be well received. Man will despise him; the nation will abhor him. He will be a servant of rulers; rulers will look upon him with the same disdain with which they look upon a servant who is far beneath them. But this will all change. The one despised will triumph. His victory will be so great that kings will have to admit that he is Jehovah's Servant and Prophet; they will rise up and do him homage.

Princes will recognize his greatness and bow before him in reverence. His victory is attributed to Jehovah's power and faithfulness to his promises. This victory is seen in the coming of the Messiah.

Vv. 8-13 – Salvation and Succor

The Servant's role included mediating God's covenant with his people (8, cf. 42:6). He would also play a role in raising up the land, as well as proclaiming deliverance to the oppressed (9). To raise up the land is to extend it as far as possible, which would be "from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Psa. 72:8; Zech. 9:10)(8). He would also proclaim deliverance to the sinful and the oppressed. Like sheep, they would find ample pastureland and would not suffer from hunger, thirst, or heat. He would lead them and guide them in their steps. They would be gathered from everywhere in all directions (9-12).

Such blessings called for heaven and earth to rejoice and the mountains to break forth into singing. Jehovah had comforted his people (40:1) and had compassion upon his afflicted (13).

Vv. 14-21 – Zion's Complaint and Amazement

Isaiah anticipated Zion's complaints (14). Seventy years of exile had taken their toll, and the people struggled to believe that God cared about them anymore. They felt as abandoned and forgotten as they had on the day that Jerusalem fell (Lam. 5:22). God answered their complaint with rhetorical questions – the answers were evident. A nursing mother cannot forget her baby or fail to have compassion on her child. This applied to God's care for his people. All the nursing mothers of Israel would forget their nursing child before God would forsake his people (15). Further, Jehovah had inscribed his people on his palms and constantly viewed their city walls (16).

Finally, Isaiah challenges the nation to look around it and see the day of salvation coming. Its children would return from everywhere and become its ornaments. Its enemies would be far away, and the nation would be astounded at the number of children (*i.e.*, citizens) it had in spite of its days of exile and affliction.

Vv. 22-26 – Jehovah's Assurance to Zion

It is Jehovah himself who shall orchestrate Israel's day of salvation (22). He would raise the standard to signal the procession home. Moreover, the day would come when foreign royalty would bow to Israel (23). The language is reminiscent of 2:1-4 the spoke of the nations flowing to Jerusalem to learn God's ways in the last days.

God would defeat Israel's oppressors even as he saved his own. In that day the entire world would know who reigned as God – the Savior, the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (24-26).

CHAPTER FIFTY

THE SERVANT AS A SUFFERING PROPEHT –

A SOLILOQUY

In ch. 42 Isaiah contrasted God's ideal servant (42:1-9) with his currently wayward servant (42:18-20). He now rebukes God's people for their sins, and then introduces God's servant who describes his ministry in his own words.

VV. 1-3 – Rebuke to the Exiles for Thinking Themselves Rejected

Isaiah places the blame for the captivity squarely upon Israel, likening the exile to God's writing Israel a certificate of divorce for the unfaithfulness he had found in her (see Deut. 24:1-4). He is answering the charge of 49:14 by challenging them to produce a writing of divorcement that would establish their charge.[195] Neither has he sold her to clear debts. Such a thought is preposterous because it assumes that God has creditors to whom he owes a debt (1). God was more than able

[195] It was different with the Northern Kingdom. It was destroyed (Amos 9:8), caused to cease (Hos. 1:4), given a bill of divorcement by Jehovah (Jer. 3:14). Therefore, the 10 Northern Tribes could never be taken back as Jehovah's wife, but from among them he could and would receive individuals (Jer. 3:8) after the disappearance of the ark of the covenant from the temple (Jer. 3:16), and Jerusalem would be called "the throne of Jehovah" (Jer. 3:17). By contrast, a bill of divorcement was never given to Judah.

to save, but when he called no one responded. His hand was not shortened and his power was not diminished so that he could not save. He is almighty and can by one word dry up the sea and make the rivers a wilderness that stinks with dead fish. Therefore, God can annihilate the girdle of waters behind which Babylon fancies herself concealed (see Isa. 42:15; 44:27), and cover the empire, which is now enslaving and torturing Israel, with a sunless and starless night of destruction (Isa. 13:10). It follows from all this, that He has come with a gospel of deliverance from sin and punishment; but Israel has given no answer, has not received this message of salvation with faith, since faith is assent to the word of God (2-3).

Vv. 4-9 – The Servant's Soliloquy

The servant now speaks for himself. He emphasizes three things: 1) his strength; 2) his suffering; and 3) his challenge.

He describes his strength in vv. 4-5. He had the tongue and ear of a disciple. He listened to the Lord, his master, who instructed him on what to say in every instance, especially to those who were weary. This included all people – The Jews were weary from being laden with sin; the Gentiles were weary from being laden with idolatry with its accompanying evils. He followed the Lord's instruction with faithful obedience (see John 8:28; Psa. 40:8; Heb. 10:7, 9).

He describes his suffering in vv. 6-7. He was humiliated for God's cause – beaten, mocked, spat upon. Even so, he remained steadfast to God's will (*set his face like a flint*) because he knew the Lord would sustain him and ultimately vindicate him.

He describes his challenge in vv. 8-9. As he reflected on God's protection and vindication, he found himself able to stand strong. Who could accuse him or bring charges against him? No not one. God was on his side. Paul uses similar language when he described the first standing of faithful children of God (see Rom. 8:31-39, esp. 33-34).

Vv. 10-11 – Light for Believers, Sorrow for Unbelievers

Two groups are now examined: 1) those who fear Jehovah and 2) those who "kindle a fire" (those who fear not Jehovah and walk in their own way). Those who trusted in Jehovah would find deliverance and help for every need. Light will shine in upon them, and their doubts will be resolved, and sufficient light will be granted them to direct their paths. Those who walked in their own way would find that the road lead to destruction. The persons intended are like those whose "tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (Jas. 3:6), and who by means of it are employed in "stirring up strife all the day long." They are condemned to be scorched by the fire that they have themselves kindled, to be made wretched by the strife that they have themselves caused to spring up.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PROSTRATE ZION (1)

Vv. 1-8 – Hearken! An Exhortation to the Faithful

This chapter begins with a look to the past, a look to the present, and a look to the future. The Lord has done great things in the past and will do great things for his people in the future, so they can trust him for the present.

Those who wanted to follow after righteousness could find solace from the past. Isaiah reminds them of their parents, Abraham and Sarah, and how from one they became many. God's hand was upon them from the beginning and he would not desert them now (vv. 1-3).

To establish that God would not leave them in the present, Isaiah described a future of blessings from God. Justice would come for all nations (4-5). Look to that which seems to you most stable and most certain to endure—the vast firmament of the heavens, and the solid earth beneath it, of which God "bears up the pillars" (Ps. 75:3). Both these, and man too, are in their nature perishable, and will (or may) vanish away and cease to be. But God, and his power to save, and his eternal law of right, can never pass away, but must endure for evermore. Let Israel be sure that the righteous purposes of God with respect to their own deliverance from Babylon, and to the conversion of the Gentiles, stand firm, and that they will most certainly be accomplished (6). Pro-

phetic words such as these emphasize once more that God's desire to bring in the Gentiles was not exclusively a New Testament concept.

Isaiah does not here address those who "seek" righteousness, but those who "know" righteousness have the law of God in their hearts, and who fear not man or his revilings. Their enemies' plans would come to nothing, but God's salvation and righteousness would last (7-8).

Surely we can learn from this teaching. How can we feel deserted or despondent in the present in light of what God has done for us in the past and what he has promised in the future for the faithful?

LESSON EIGHTEEN

Vv. 9-16 – An Appeal to Jehovah and His Reply

God's promises of action were comforting. Isaiah now appeals to Jehovah to act on those promises. His appeal is urgent; note the double "awake." The call to "awake" is anthropomorphism. God neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. 121:4). He calls upon the arm of Jehovah that represents the power that he has exercised in the past and promised in the future. "Rahab" and "the monster" recalls Egypt and Pharaoh (cf. 30:7; Psa. 87:4; Ezek. 29:3). In defeating Egypt the Lord also demonstrated his power over Egypt's gods (Ex. 12:12)(9-10). The description of the returning ransomed coming with singing to Zion (11) closely parallels 35:10. God was, in effect, preparing a "second exodus."

Isaiah records the Lord's response (11-16). The Lord had brought comfort to his people. Why did they continue to fear humans who persecuted them, when their comforter had made the universe (12-13)?

Moreover, the time of the deliverance was at hand (14-16). Prisoners would be set free; God had his hand on his own; he who had created the universe would not forget his own.

Vv. 17-20 – Jerusalem, Awake! Stand Up! – Her Tragic Plight

Isaiah calls on Jerusalem to awake from its drunken stupor that came from drinking of the cup of God's wrath. Its judgment was complete; it

had drained the cup (17).[196] Jerusalem's helplessness was obvious. There was no one to guide her or to take her by the hand and lead her (18). No one could assist her because all of her children had drunk of the cup. All felt the effects of God's judgment (19-20).

Vv. 21-23 – Jehovah's Gracious Promise

In view of Jerusalem's inability to save herself, Jehovah says, *"Therefore, hear this now."* Parent and child were both afflicted, drunken, not with wine, but with the cup of God's wrath (21). God will "sober them up" by taking away the cup (22). Instead, he would give the cup to those who had opposed and oppressed Jerusalem who would then face his judgment (23).

CHAPTER 52: 1-12

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PROSTRATE ZION (2)

Vv.1-6 – Awake, Jerusalem! Put on Your Beautiful Garments

The first 12 verses of chapter 52 are a continuation of chapter 51. There is no reason for a break at this particular point.

For the third time Isaiah uses the double "Awake" (see 51:9, 17). Zion has lain prostrate, helpless and weak, like a woman in a drunken stupor, having drained the cup of God's wrath. Her deliverance involved two aspects: 1) removing the evidence of slavery, such as dust and chains, and 2) adorning herself with her beautiful garments and take her rightful place as a queen (1-2).

There is some disagreement over the meaning of "for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." Some suggest that it means no heathen nation shall again attack and subjugate God's people as Babylon had done. This theory is not supported by history or scripture, and is contrary to both. After the re-

[196] The cup of God's wrath is common in the prophets (Jer. 25:15, 17,28; Ezek. 23:31, 32, 33). It appears again in 51:22. Nations that opposed God's people also drank it according to God's timing (Obad 16). Some suppose that it was this cup that the Christ had in mind in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39, 42).

turn from Babylon and the division of Alexander's empire, Jerusalem became the soccer ball which Syria and Egypt kicked back and forth during the third and second centuries BC. Although neither kingdom destroyed the city, Antiochus Epiphanes[197] subdued it, desecrated the temple and its worship by offering swine's flesh on an altar to Zeus, and forbade circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and the possession of copies of the Scriptures. Later, pagan Rome entered the city and destroyed it. Scripture indicates that the reference is to spiritual Israel and the spiritual kingdom. Ezekiel writes: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel" (Ezek. 44:9). Joel writes: "So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (Joel 3:17). Zechariah adds: "8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes. 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:8-10). All who enter spiritual Zion, the city of God, will have been circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands (see Col. 2:11; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15). No others shall enter into it.

Jehovah had a right to step in and redeem Jerusalem. He had chosen to deliver his people into captivity for their sin, not because he owed another kingdom anything. Therefore, it was his prerogative to take his people and redeem them for his purpose (3). Many people had oppressed, mocked, and belittled the people of God. Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon had all done so in turn (4-5).

[197] Antiochus Epiphanes (ca. 215-164 BC). King of Syria (175-164 BC) .

But in the day of deliverance, God's people would know and call his name again (6). God had predicted it and God would make it happen.

Vv. 7-12 – The Herald of Good News, and an Exhortation

By prophetic inspiration Isaiah sees God's promise fulfilled, his power exerted, the people redeemed, and the messenger bringing the good news (cf. 40:9; 41:27). As the messenger herald's Zion's redemption, Isaiah sees him upon the mountains proclaiming salvation, his feet being the symbolic representation of the messenger.[198] A part of the message is the proclamation, "Thy God reigneth!" This exclamation is the basis of the tidings. Although the message included the deliverance and return of the exiles, it need not – in fact, it cannot – be limited to that event. Its universality is indicated by Paul's application of this verse to the apostles whom the Lord prepared and sent into all of the world with the good news of salvation (Rom. 10:15-16).

Jerusalem's watchmen[199] were the first to see the approaching messenger and they shouted joyfully together. The expression "eye to eye" is used only here and in Numbers 14:14 where it is translated "face to face." Most likely it is saying that the watchmen will closely observe the realization of God's purpose and work *when Jehovah returneth to Zion* (8).

The Lord had indeed restored Zion. Indeed, God "rolled up his sleeves" ("bare[d] his holy arm") before the nations and manifested his salvation before them (9-10).

God called upon his people to leave Babylon as a pure people – touch no unclean thing. It was important that the bearers home of the temple vessels that had been carried away be clean. They could not pursue God's holiness and cling to their evil ways (11).

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[198] Nahum uses almost the same words when announcing the fall of Nineveh (Nah. 1:15).

[199] The watchmen are not indentified beyond their "job description." Some identify them with the prophets who are elsewhere called "watchmen" (Ez. 3:17; 33:2,7), though nothing here requires them to be or otherwise indicates that they are prophets.

Finally, God's people would not leave Babylon in a panic or frenzy. The Lord would lead them out in an orderly fashion. God would go before them and, to use a present day expression, would also "have their backs.

Isaiah's words of deliverance heralded a glad day when Judah would return from exile. He then goes beyond those images to describe God's Servant, whose work would bring a salvation far greater than deliverance from Babylon (52:13-53:12).

CHAPTERS 52:13 – 53:12

Victory Through Vicarious Suffering

Students of the prophets generally concede that the loftiest height of prophecy is found in these verses, even though the Servant neither appears nor speaks. The verses deal with both purpose and achievement. The Servant is to conquer as a servant, not as a warrior (cf. Rev. 5:4-6). There is no time factor in the verses. It deals with the past, the present, and the future, *i.e.*, it embraces the whole of time.

Ch. 52:13-15 – Exaltation of the Servant

In these verses the themes of ch. 53 are condensed, but appear in reverse order. Here exaltation precedes suffering. In ch. 53 suffering precedes exaltation. In these verses Isaiah uses the future tense, while in 53:1-9 he uses the past tense (speaks of the future as already accomplished). In 53:10-12 he returns to the future.

Once again Isaiah begins with "behold." Attention is focused on the servant. First, He will deal wisely – act with divine insight and understanding so as to produce effective and successful results (cf. Jer. 23:5). Second, Isaiah uses three terms (*exalted, lifted up* and *very high*). Delitzsch points out that these terms are progressive, relating to the commencement, the continuation, and the climax of the exaltation. The climax was reached when Christ was raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand (Acts 2:32-33; Phil. 2:5-11) (13).

However, before the exaltation will come the humiliation. He will be subjected to the worst of treatment and the severest of suffering.

Many will be astonished, struck with amazement and shock at what they see. The reason is found in the parenthetical statement – "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (14).

Commentators are divided on verse 15. Some argue that "sprinkle" refers to the cleansing and purification ceremonies of the Old Testament, and Isaiah had in mind the cleansing and purifying of nations through the Servant's suffering. Others argue that the rendering of the ASV margin, "startle," is the correct translation, and that those who were astonished at what they had seen of the Servant's marred visage are now startled, caused to leap up in amazement, trembling with awe as they behold his exaltation. Delitzsch takes the latter position and says this of the Hebrew word's meaning: "The verb *nâzâh* signified primarily to *leap* or *spring;* hence *hizzâh,* with the causative meaning to *sprinkle.* The *kal* combines the intransitive and transitive meanings of the word "spirt," and is used in the former sense in Isa. 63:3, to signify the springing up or sprouting up of any liquid scattered about in drops. The Arabic *nazâ* (see Ges. *Thes.*) shows that this verb may also be applied to the springing or leaping of living beings, caused by excess of emotion. And accordingly we follow the majority of the commentators in adopting the rendering *exsilire faciet.* The fact that whole nations are the object, and not merely individuals, proves nothing to the contrary, as Hab. 3:6 clearly shows. The reference is to their leaping up in amazement (LXX μ); and the verb denotes less an external than an internal movement. They will tremble with astonishment within themselves (cf., *pâchădū v*^{e}*râg*^{e}*zū* in Jer. 33:9), being electrified, as it were, by the surprising change that has taken place in the servant of Jehovah."

Beyer makes a strong argument for the use of "sprinkle." "Some scholars have debated the use of the Hebrew word *nazah*, here translated 'sprinkle,' and suggested—based on the Septuagint reading—that the word should be translated 'startle' or 'surprise.' This theory, however, has difficulty reconciling the Hebrew to this meaning. ¶ If in fact the idea of "sprinkle" is correct, the connotation is probably priestly, since the word is typically used in a cultic sense. The servant somehow in-

tercedes on behalf of the nations as a priest might do. Exactly how he does this is not revealed until later."

Either interpretation is true.[200] In response to Beyer's comments it may be said that Delitzsch, a recognized Hebrew scholar, had no trouble using "startle." Moreover, The translators of the Septuagint, who were presumably Hebrew scholars and were in fact Hebrews,[201] had no difficulty. Hailey accepted "startle" and argued based on the context: "Though ["sprinkle"] has much to its credit, the latter seems to be verified by what follows: *For that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand*."[202] Kings, possibly among Gentiles, will be startled and spring up on amazement, though they will keep silent, when they see and understand what the have not previously been shown or told. As for the Jews, they have long heard wonderful words and seen marvelous deeds, but they have been deaf and blind to the underlying meaning. They should have recognized the Servant-Messiah when He came, but they did not."

LESSON NINETEEN

CHAPTER 53

Ch. 53:1-3 – Acquaintance with Grief

[200] "Sprinkle," as used here, has nothing to do with the form of New Testament baptism.

[201] The verb *nâzâh* signified primarily to *leap* or *spring;* hence *hizzâh,* with the causative meaning to *sprinkle.* The *kal* combines the intransitive and transitive meanings of the word "spirt," and is used in the former sense in Isa. 63:3, to signify the springing up or sprouting up of any liquid scattered about in drops. The Arabic *nazâ* (see Ges. *Thes.*) shows that this verb may also be applied to the springing or leaping of living beings, caused by excess of emotion. And accordingly we follow the majority of the commentators in adopting the rendering *exsilire faciet.* The fact that whole nations are the object, and not merely individuals, proves nothing to the contrary, as Hab. 3:6 clearly shows. The reference is to their leaping up in amazement (LXX μ); and the verb denotes less an external than an internal movement. They will tremble with astonishment within themselves (cf., *pâchădū v^{e}râg^{e}zū* in Jer. 33:9), being electrified, as it were, by the surprising change that has taken place in the servant of Jehovah.

[202] This is Isaiah's stated reason for the conduct of the kings.

Who hath believed our message? Both John and Paul quote this verse. John quotes it and then comments, "These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him" (John 12:37-41). Paul applies the verse to the failure of the Jews to hearken to the glad tidings preached by the apostles (Rom. 10:16-21). The *message* is identified as the messianic message from God through Isaiah, Jesus, and the apostles that was generally rejected by the people. *The arm of Jehovah* is a metonymy for the power of God that is revealed in the message and that is exercised in the salvation that results from believing it (cf. 51:5; 52:10). By both word and power God revealed Himself and the salvation He would provide (1).

So certain is Isaiah of what will be done that he speaks of coming events in the past tense. They are as if already accomplished: *For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground*. The Servant will grow up in the constant care and presence of Jehovah (cf. John 8:29). The *dry ground* out of which he will grow is the fallen lot of the house of David. The Edomite Herod, whose ancestors were enemies of God's people, was on the throne of Judah, and Rome ruled over him. The priesthood was corrupt, greatly influenced by the Sadducean philosophy of unbelief, and the people were bound by tradition instead of committed to truth. Out of such a dry political, religious, and moral desert, God will make a twig, "a dry tree" according to Ezekiel (Ezek. 17:22-24), to flourish. Horribly disfigured by the treatment at his trials and the crucifixion, he will be repulsive to look upon. There will be *no beauty*. No regal adornments such as the people desire, but only an unimposing peasant carpenter from a small obscure village in Galilee. He will have none of the human glory that men look for and desire (2).

As a man humble in background and unimpressive by the world's standards, *he was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.* To despise is to ascribe little worth to someone or something, to hold in contempt, as Esau despised his birthright and sold it for a mess of pottage (Gen. 25:34). The grief with which the Servant was acquainted was not his own, but the spiritual condition of the human race, the fruit of their sin (cf. 1:4-6). This

caused the Servant deep concern and mental anguish, sorrow of soul under which he groaned with grief. Men, calloused by sin and steeped in their own iniquities, despised such a tender and holy spirit, failing to see in him the true Servant of God who could lift them to solid spiritual health and right relationship with their Creator. Doing nothing but good (Acts 10:38), he came to save God's people, but they repaid him by doing nothing but evil and bad. We, the nation, even all men esteemed him not; all failed to see the spiritual beauty of his life and teaching and therefore failed to set a proper value upon him. How blind man must be not to have recognized then, or to recognize even now, the greatest Benefactor and Benefit ever offered by God to the human family (3).

Ch. 53:4-6 – The Servant's Vicarious Suffering

In the Hebrew the pronouns are emphatic – *surely they were our griefs which he bore*. Having spoken of the Servant's humiliation (2, 3), Isaiah hastens to declare the reason for it. Twelve times over within the space of nine verses he asserts with the most emphatic reiteration that all the Servant's sufferings were vicarious, borne for mankind, to save mankind from the consequences of his sins, to enable him to escape punishment. This doctrine from the Old Testament is set forth with equal distinctness in the New – Matt. 20:28; John 11:50-52: Rom. 3:25; 5:6-8; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 8:9; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24, etc. – and forms the hope, the trust, and the consolation of Christians. The application that Matthew makes of this passage to our Lord's miracles of healing (8:17) is certainly not the primary sense of the words, but may be regarded as a secondary application of them. Christ's sufferings were the remedy for all the ills that flesh is heir to. The servant willingly took these burdens upon himself, but because of his painful sufferings and afflictions, his sorrows and acquaintance with grief, the people regarded him as smitten by the Lord, punished for his own sins. The Servant was smitten by God, but only in the sense that God permitted him to suffer. God provided him as an offering, a sacrifice for man's sins. Little did the people realize that he was being subjected to such indignities for their sins, not his own (4).

Verse 5 corrects the misconception and contains further evidence of the great truth that all of Christ's sufferings were for us, and constituted the basis of salvation from sin. The form is varied but the truth is one. Christ was **wounded** or **pierced for our iniquities**[203] 1) by the **thorns**; 2) by the **nails**; and 3) by the **spear**. The wounds inflicted by the nails caused his death. He was **bruised**, or **crushed** (comp. *e.g.*, 3:15; 19:10; 57:15; Psa. 72:4). The **chastisement of our peace** was upon him, *i.e.* the chastisement that brought us peace, that brought an end to the enmity between fallen man and an offended God, that made them once more at one (Eph. 2:15-17). **With his stripes we are (were) healed** (comp 1 Peter 2:24). In addition to the blows inflicted on him with the hand (Matt. 26:27) and with the reed (Matt. 27:30), our Lord was judicially scourged (Matt. 27:26). Such scourging would have left the stripes by which we are healed (5).

Why was all of this vicarious suffering and grief necessary? **All we like sheep had gone astray**. This may be a reference to the entire nation of Israel that went astray before ever reaching the promised land. It may also refer to the entire race of mankind that needed atonement and redemption. The truth is that it applies to every accountable person who ever lived. Isaiah defines what he means by "gone astray": **We have turned every one to his own way.** This does not mean just a few. Collectively and individually, the whole world had sinned. There was "none that did good" absolutely. "No, not one" (Psa. 14:3). All had abandoned "the way of Jehovah" (40:3) to walk in their "own ways (66:3). In all of this **the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**. Literally, *the Lord caused to light upon him*. God the Father lays upon the son the burden that the Son voluntarily accepts. He comes into the world to do his Father's will. He prays to the Father, "Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, *but as thou wilt*" (Matt. 26:39). Paul tells us that God "made him to be sin for us who knew no

[203] Our "iniquities" are our acts of rebellion against God's authority and law. Such acts bring a separation or breach between man and God. Such acts must be either punished or pardoned. In bearing the guilt of man's sins, the Servant also bore the punishment for them. The punishment for sin is eternal separation from God (2 Thess. 1:9). Jesus suffered this very punishment (though not eternally) on the cross (Psa. 22:1; Matt. 27:46; cf. also Eph. 2:14-18; 1 Peter 2:21-25).

sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). The cup could not pass because the Father "sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Thus, if there was to be substitution for mankind's salvation, the iniquity of us all must be laid upon him. How wonderful! How marvelous! The redemption is as universal as the sin if man will only turn from his evil way to walk in the obedience of faith in the will and way of God (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

Ch. 53:7-9 – Total Submission of the Servant

The suffering, death, and burial of the Servant are foretold in these verses. **He was oppressed**. This surely included all of the ill treatment that a tyrant would inflict upon a captive (cf. 9:4; 14:3-4), **yet when he was afflicted**, suffering the physical and inner pain to which he willingly submitted for others, **he opened not his mouth**. As a lamb that is slaughtered or a sheep that is shorn remains silent,[204] so did the Servant react to his tormentors. When he was accused by the chief priests and questioned by Pilate, "he gave [them] no answer, not even to one word" (Matt. 27:1-14). When he was questioned by Herod, "he answered him nothing (Luke 23:9). The references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36) spring from this passage in the book of Isaiah (7).

The unfair judicial treatment of the Servant is foreseen. *By* ("From," margin) *oppression and judgment he was taken away*. This describes a violence that cloaked itself under the formalities of a legal process. The Septuagint Version, which is quoted by Philip in Acts (ch. 8:33), must have been derived from quite a different text. It preserves, however, the right rendering of the verb, "was he taken away," *i.e.* removed from the earth. Delitzsch explains, "Hostile oppression and judicial persecution were the circumstances out of which he was carried away by death." Young states, "It is best to understand ***he was taken*** as referring to being taken away by death from an unjust trial. This is sup-

[204] This is the second reference to sheep, the first to man and this one to the Servant. What a difference! The first compares man to the propensity of the sheep to stray from the safety of the shepherd. The second compares the Servant to the sheep going quietly to be shorn or slaughtered.

ported by the parallel ***he was cut off[205] out of the land of the living*** (cf. Prov. 24:11). From the midst of his suffering he was taken away by death." Pilate's verdict of innocent, which he repeated three times (John 18:38; 19:4, 6), was in effect reversed when he washed his hands and delivered Jesus unto the Jews to be crucified (John 19:16). Who among those living at the time of his crucifixion had any idea that his death was for the transgressions of God's people, ***to whom the stroke was due***. The people of his generation saw him as a blasphemer deserving of death. In fact, in view of his life and theirs, they should have realized that they themselves were worthy of death and that he was the Servant who came to reveal God and his redemptive love (8).

Having revealed the violent nature of the Servant's death, Isaiah turns to the Servant's burial. ***And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death***. Barnes interprets the passage, "And his grave was appointed with the wicked; but he was with a rich man in his death." The thought is that although it was intended that he be buried with the wicked – either with his cross according to Roman custom or at an ignominious site according to Jewish custom – he was instead buried in the tomb of a rich man. Delitzsch concurs: "They assigned him his grave with criminals, and after he had actually died a martyr's death, with a rich man." Jehovah could by his providence prevent his beloved Servant from experiencing ignominious burial. The prophecy was fulfilled in the request of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathaea that the body be given to him for burial. Pilate granted the request and thus provided a burial with dignity in a new tomb (Matt. 27:57-60). Christ's life was ever above reproach, his speech always sin-

[205] The Hebrew word translated "cut off" is always used of a violent death. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* comments on its usage: "The verb describes the division of an object into parts (1 Kgs 3:25; 2 Kgs 6:4) and even the chewing of food (Isa 9:19). When followed by the preposition מִן (from) it connotes a violent severance from a former way of life. The cutting off might be from the fold (Hab 3:17), worship (2 Chr 26:21), the protective care of God (Ps 88:5 [H 6]), or life itself (Isa 53:8). The Niphal without the preposition refers more generally to death or destruction (Ezek 37:11; Lam 3:54). In Est 2:1 and Job 22:28 the verb has the connotation common in Aramaic, of making a pronouncement; cf. our English word "decide" from the Latin, "to cut off from."

cere and true. He had done no criminal act and had not failed in his work and mission. Therefore, his Father saw to it that the faithful Servant received an honorable burial.

Ch. 53:10-12 – Victory and Reward

How can these verses be labeled "Victory and Reward" given the way they begin – **"Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . . ."** As Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and **foreknowledge of God**, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23). Despite the innocence of the Servant, the Lord took pleasure in bruising him. His death was not in the hands of wicked men (Acts 2:23), but in the Lord's hands. This does not absolve from responsibility those who put the Servant to death, but they were not in control of the situation. They were doing only that which God permitted them to do. In the Lord's pleasure there was no delight, nor does the word mean that the Lord took pleasure in the Servant's being bruised on the part of others. Indeed, he briefly turned his face away from Calvary's awful scene (Mt. 27:46). That which pleased the Lord was providing a sacrifice adequate for the redemption of man. His delight was in that which the Servant achieved. This was the cost of salvation. The life that the Christ poured out was an adequate, perfect, and complete offering in every respect (10).

Three results follow the offering of this sacrifice. 1) **He shall see his seed**; the Servant shall see his spiritual posterity, the new spiritual Israel born of his sacrifice, spread abroad and possess the nations (54:3; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15-16; Phil. 3:3). 2) **He shall prolong his days**, extend his years into the infinite future. Clearly this is a reference to the resurrection, for his death has been plainly announced (8-9). He was dead, but is now alive forevermore and holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:17-18). 3) **And the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.** It pleased Jehovah to bruise the servant so that his purpose might be achieved. It was God's good pleasure that through his victory the new Israel would prosper, its destiny resting in his hand. The servant now occupies the throne of God as KING OF KINGS and LORD

OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16). He is the head of the redeemed body (Eph. 1:22). Through his sacrifice and suffering, he has acquired the right to hold the book of God's plan for human redemption (Rev. 5:4-7). The saints are given power to overcome Satan through the blood of him who made sacrifice (Rev. 12:11). This is **the pleasure of Jehovah** that continues to prosper in the Servant's hand (11).

LESSON TWENTY

By his sacrifice and conquest over sin and death, the Servant will not only justify many, but will also triumph in victory over Satan. "**Therefore** (because of his victory) **I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors**." The Servant will be given a place among the great conquering ones of the earth. Paul declares, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." In his conquest, the Servant will divide the spoil with the strong, the mighty or powerful one. Haley suggests that this points to the Servant's conquest over Satan (the strong one) and the deliverance of many of those whom he held captive. He adds that the Servant divides the booty with Satan, citing Luke 11:21-22: 21 "When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace: 22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." It seems clear, however, that spoils are not divided with the one conquered, but with those who were on the conqueror's side. So it is here. Young seems closer to the mark:

> "The thought is that the servant will be as successful and triumphant in his mission as other victors were in theirs. There are many who are victors and they will receive the spoils of their victory. Among them is the Servant. Perhaps it is true that "many" here signifies "great ones", or "mighty," but of this one cannot be certain. The speaker is God."

> . . . . The servant appears as the primary agent who divides the spiritual victories and fruits (i.e. the spoil) with the mighty . . . . Those who are here spoken of as "the many" and "the strong" are the spiritual seed mentioned in verse 10. His people participate in the enjoyment of the spoils of his victory.

The chapter closes with a recapitulation of the reasons why the servant is so gloriously exalted. He exposed his soul unto death; he voluntarily laid it bare even to death. No man took his life from him, but he laid it down of himself. The verb in the second clause may have a reflexive sense (*he permitted himself to be numbered*). Although he permitted himself to be numbered with the transgressors, nevertheless, he bore the sin of many. These transgressors were not mere evil doers, but were criminals and the New Testament so interprets the passage (Luke 22:37; Matt. 26:54, 56; Mark 15:27-28[206]). The events that occurred fulfilled the prophecy; the Servant was condemned as a blasphemer (Matt. 26:65;, crucified with malefactors (Luke 23:32), called "that deceiver" (Matt. 27:63), and regarded generally by the Jews as accursed (Deut. 21:32). Nevertheless, the Servant bore their transgressions and made intercession for them. That is love. That is grace. That is God.

One last thought. A survey of the literature from the period of the early church reveals surprising evidence. As one might expect, the church fathers see Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. However, the early evidence from Judaism also suggests that Isaiah's words describe the Messiah.

The Targum[207] to Isaiah, an early Aramaic witness to the Hebrew Old Testament, interestingly adds the words "The Messiah" after the

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[206] The ASV omits v. 28, but includes it in the margin with the admission that many ancient authorities contain it.

[207] A written translation or paraphrase of a biblical text. While "Targum" could designate a translation of a biblical text into any language, it is to the corpus of Aramaic versions composed in rabbinic times that the term more specifically applies. The rabbis realized the importance of Targum as a highly effective means of religious education in schools, as well as in the liturgical setting of the synagogue. The Targum was understood as part of the Oral Torah.

words "my servant" in 52:13. And the Targum does not stand as a lone witness. Jewish authorities who debated early church leaders did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but they agreed Isaiah's words described the Messiah.

The first known Jewish commentator to suggest that Israel might be the suffering servant was Rashi, who lived in the 11th century AD. Rashi found his supporters, but Jewish commentators after Rashi sometimes disagreed with him, arguing the messianic view but distinguishing the Messiah from Jesus as earlier Jewish interpreters had done.

This evidence is important because sometimes one gets the impression Judaism has always maintained the servant is Israel, whereas the church has believed the servant is Jesus. Actually, both Judaism and Christianity appear to have been united for a millennium in believing 52:13 – 53:12 described the Messiah. The difference of opinion lay only with the issue of the Messiah's specific identity.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

THE FUTURE SPLENDOR OF ZION

Vv. 1-8 – The Joy and Enlargement of Zion

There is a close relationship between 52:13 – 53:12. The undertone of grief, sadness, and suffering that characterized those verses gives way to joy, singing, and assurance. All attempts to interpret this chapter as a prophecy of the exiles' return from Babylon and the rebuilding of physical Israel as a nation and of physical Jerusalem as a city are extremely weak. The subject here is the glorious results of the Servant's sacrificial work redeeming a spiritual people. Chapter 54 reveals God fulfilling his ultimate plan. This interpretation is in perfect harmony with the Old Testament prophecies, the work of Christ, and the teaching of the apostles. The church as a part of God's eternal purpose was

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Jewish scholars of the early Christian era in the Aramaic Targum on the prophets paraphrase Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my Servant Messiah" and begin Isaiah 52:13, "Behold my Servant Messiah will prosper."

no accident or afterthought; it was very definitely in his plan (Eph. 3:9-11) and was foreshadowed in Isaiah. Although neither Zion nor Jerusalem is named between chapter 52, where both terms occur four times, and chapters 59 and 62 respectively, it is evident that the symbolic wife of Jehovah in chapter 54 is Jerusalem-Zion. Fallen and disgraced like a drunken woman with no one to guide her (51:17-18), she is restored under the Servant and raised to a state of unparalleled glory.

Verses 1-5 are a development of chapter 49:14-23. Zion was barren during the time of her captivity, which was a period of separation, not divorcement (50:1), from Jehovah her husband. But now this desolate period, the result of judgment, is over. Zion is to break forth in joyous singing, for she who did not travail[208] in childbirth is now to bear profusely. Given Paul's allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Gal. 4:21-31) where he quotes this verse, Isaiah is speaking of the children to be born of the spiritual promise (Gen. 12:3) rather than those born of the fleshly promise (Gen. 12:2). This promise of spiritual posterity through Abraham's seed was fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom, the church. At this point the Servant, the husband, takes back spiritual Zion as his wife to bear spiritual children unto him (1).

More children require greater living quarters. The curtains (the panels that make up the tent) need to be stretched and the stakes need to be strengthened. Why the figure of a tent when God's dwelling place among his people will be permanent (33:20). Perhaps it is because God's children, wherever they are found, will be nomadic in nature, being sojourners and pilgrims" in the world (1 Pet. 2:11-12). They walk as did the apostles who had "no certain dwelling place" (1 Cor. 4:11). They may live in a tent, but it is to be large enough to accommodate the family and strong enough to protect it from any storm (2).

Zion will spread in all directions. They shall possess the nations, *i.e.*, conquer the Gentiles, not by military power but by spiritual conquest. This will lead to the inhabitation of formerly desolate cities (3).

[208] The Hebrew word used here refers to labor in child bearing. The Hebrew word used in 53:11 refers to labor by a workman, *e.g.*, as in construction on a building.

Zion is not to fear any person or thing or power. Neither shall it be ashamed or confounded. She has put behind her her former idolatry and immorality. These, along with the reproach of her widowhood, are to be remembered no more (4).

In fact, her widowhood is an aberration; Jehovah is still her husband. Jehovah loved her but hated her wicked ways. She was the unfaithful wife of his youth who had been cast off, but is now called home (5-6).

She had been forsaken for a "small moment," but is gathered with great mercy. Jehovah's wrath had overflowed and hidden his face, but now he looks to her with everlasting kindness and mercy (7-8).

"For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

Vv. 9–10 – "As the Waters of Noah"

As God swore after "the waters of Noah" flooded the world that such would never happen again, so he swears that he will not be wroth with or rebuke his wife. The mountains will depart and the hills will be removed before his loving kindness departs from her or his covenant of peace be removed from her. A new name for Jehovah assures performance – Jehovah that hath mercy on thee (9-10). This promise is not made to physical Israel, but to spiritual Israel. Natural Israel and physical Jerusalem both experienced the vent of his indignation from soon after the return from exile until the destruction by the Romans. The promise made to spiritual Israel does not mean that it will never be tested. What it does mean is that though she might be unmercifully persecuted by her enemies and forced to pass through the floods and fire of tribulation, the true spiritual Zion and Jerusalem (the church) will never be the object of God's wrath and judgment of destruction (cf. Hab. 2:6-7; Zech. 14:1-5; Heb. 12:22-28).

In the midst of a changing, crumbling, and passing world where new theories are ever being substituted for tried and true values, there are some things that are permanent, unshakable, and immovable. God's being and character are fixed; the deity, victory, and rule of Christ are permanent; a kingdom that cannot shaken has been received (Heb.

12:28); a firm foundation stands, having the seal of God (2 Tim. 2:19); the constitution of that kingdom, the covenant of peace sealed by Christ's blood (Matt. 26:28) shall not pass away (Matt. 24:35).

Vv. 11-17 – Jerusalem's Glory and Permanence in the Messianic Age

Jerusalem is seen as she was during the captivity – "O thou afflicted." From the past, captivity, Isaiah looks to the future, deliverance. That which the ASV calls "fair colors" is generally understood to be *stibium* or *antimony*. Its meaning[209] is varied as evidence by various translations (ESV, NET, RSV, NRSV – antimony; NIV, NCV, TMV – turquoise; KJV – fair colors; NKJV – colorful gems; YLT – cement; NLT – precious jewels; GWT, GNT – precious stones; HCS – black mortar). The idea seems to be that the precious stones of which the city is to be built will be embedded in a setting that emphasizes their beauty, as eye paint emphasizes the beauty of a woman's eyes. The foundations will be laid with blue sapphires, the towers with rubies, the gates with carbuncles[210], and the walls with precious stones (11-12).

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[209] **ANTIMONY** (Ăn′ tĭ mō nē) Silvery-white, brittle, metallic chemical element of crystalline structure, found only in combination. It is used in alloys with other metals to harden them and increase their resistance to chemical actions. Compounds of antimony are used in medicines, pigments, matches, and fireproofing. In the NRSV and the NASB "antimony" is used as a translation of the Hebrew terms *ʾabne-puk* to describe the materials used to build the temple (1 Chron. 29:2; Isa. 54:11; NIV "turquoise"; REB, TEV "stones for mosaic work"; KJV "glistering stones" and "stones with fair colors," respectively). It is likely that *ʾabne-puk* refers to some sort of cement or mortar used in the creation of mosaics, which it is suggested would make precious stones appear larger and more colorful. In two other passages (2 Kings 9:30; Jer. 4:30), *puk* is consistently translated as eye paint. One of Job's daughters was named Kerenhapuk—that is, "horn of eye paint" (Job 42:14).

[210] **carbuncle** /ˈkɑːbʌŋk(ə)l/

▪ **noun**

1 a severe abscess or multiple boil in the skin.

2 a bright red gem, in particular a cabochon garnet.

– DERIVATIVES **carbuncular** adjective

– ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *charbuncle*, from Latin *carbunculus* 'small

Vv. 11-12 describe the external glory of the church; v. 13 describes the internal glory. Her children (converts) shall be taught of and from Jehovah (see John 6:45; 1 Thess. 4:9; Jer. 1:34). Such knowledge is a prerequisite to citizenship in the new Zion. The source of this wisdom is not human wisdom or the philosophies or traditions of man. Those citizens shall have great peace (Phil.4:7) (13).

Citizens of Zion will be established in righteousness, far from oppression, and free from fear. Righteousness is the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 89:14; 97:2). His righteousness and salvation will be "for ever" unto all generations, never to disappear (51:6, 8). Since Jehovah is the source of the righteousness (17), Zion will also be established in righteousness it also will last forever. It will no longer be "tossed with the tempest" (11). God's promise is that once Zion is established by his righteousness and that of Zion's citizens, those citizens may put far off all dread of oppression, have no cause to fear oppression or destruction that will not even come near (14).

Those who would oppress Zion may gather together for that purpose, but it will not be of God. Such plans will come to naught "because of thee." This does not declare that the citizens of Zion shall defeat the enemy, but that God will defeat the enemy because the citizens of Zion are his people. To use a modern expression, as Creator God brought the oppressor into the world, and he can just as easily take them out (15).

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coal', from *carbo* 'coal, charcoal'. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*

In Prov 17:8 is found the expression אֶבֶן חֵן, which is literally "stone of grace" and is usually rendered "precious" or the like. Isaiah 54:12 has two additional word combinations, אֶבֶן אֶקְדָּח and אֶבֶן חֶפֶץ: "carbuncles" and "pleasant stones" (KJV), "garnet" and "jewels" (NEB), "crystal" and "precious stones" (JB). Ezekiel (Ezek 28:14, 16) speaks of the "fire stone." From the context (especially v. 13 with its וְיָקָרָה אֶבֶן), this easily translated expression probably refers to a stone which sparkles. Even today diamonds are frequently described as fiery. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

An exclamation mark is placed on God's ability to protect his people. He created both the smith that makes the weapons and the waster that destroys (16).

With the smiths, the weapons, and the wasters under God's control and subject to his will no weapon that is formed against his people will succeed; no oppressor or waster can defeat or destroy her. This promise of protection and victory is a permanent possession of God's people. These servants are partakers of the salvation purchased by the Servant, and accept their responsibility to service as he did. The righteousness by which they triumph and by which they receive justice is of Jehovah. The guarantee of their victory is God's word – **saith Jehovah.** That all the powers that have sought to destroy God's spiritual city and people have failed and fallen (among them the Jews and Rome) assures victory throughout time. Clearly the prophecy points to the church and the spiritual Jerusalem of the New Testament.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

The Great Invitation and Mercy for All

Many titles have been chosen for this chapter: ESV – The Compassion of the Lord; NAS95 – The Free Offer of Mercy; NIV – Invitation to the Thirsty; HCS – Come to the Lord; NKJV, NRSV – An invitation to Abundant Life; NLT – Invitation to the Lord's Salvation. Haley's pretty well covers the waterfront. In 52:13-53:12 we learned that the Servant came providing salvation for all. We have seen the glory of Zion enhanced, the tent enlarged to accommodate a large influx of children, and Jehovah has taken Judah back as his wife (ch. 54). Now Jehovah invites the cast-off nations to come and partake of the spiritual life that he has provided through the Servant. To limit this chapter to exiled Judah in Babylon, or even to give the Babylonian exiles major prominence, is to restrict the call to confines entirely too narrow. Chapter 55 foreshadows the invitation of Jesus to come unto him and find rest (Matt. 11:28-30), the invitation to the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14), and the abundance of God's grace to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:11). The invitation is both urgent and universal.

Vv. 1-5 – Come and Partake Without Price

Jehovah earlier promised that he would provide abundant water for the thirsty (41:17-18) and that in the purified Zion "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation " (12:3). He has now provided that water and invites, "**Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters**" (the plural speaks of abundance). The purpose is to quench the soul's thirst for God (cf. Psa. 42:2; 63:1). The invitation is universal (every one); the water is free (he that hath no money); the banquet is ready (come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.) But how does one buy without money? The emphasis here is on the free grace of God who abundantly provides and graciously invites all to come and eat and drink freely (1).

But there is a problem. They spend what money they have on things that are of no value and that perish. They spend their money on that which is not bread and work for that which does not satisfy. This practice they are to leave and to hearken unto God from whom they will receive that which is good and make their soul delight itself in fatness, "that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19) (2).

If they hear and respond by coming to God, their soul will live. By this process they will also enter into an everlasting covenant with God, even the sure mercies of David. Everything promised to David will be fulfilled. Like earlier covenants[211], this one will have a sign: "[12]For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands. [13]Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (12-13). The final covenant between God and his people will not cancel out the earlier covenants, but fulfill them, perfectly and completely (Matt. 5:17). The final outcome of the work of the Servant will be the full realization of all that God has promised from the beginning. "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the

[211] The covenant with Noah had the rainbow; the covenant with Abraham had circumcision; the covenant at Sinai had sprinkled blood.

glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). In Christ the throne and kingdom of David have now been permanently established, and the sure mercies of an everlasting covenant of peace provided (3).

Jehovah has given Christ for a witness to the peoples, and as a leader and commander. Christ can bear firsthand testimony to the truth. John describes him as "the faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5). A leader is one who shows the way; a commander is one who gives commands. Jesus is both, the former in his humanity and the latter in his divinity (4).

Apparently speaking to the witness, he is told that he will call a nation that he had not known, that the nation that had not known him would come to him "because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee." By means of the gospel this nation will be called from among the nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). It will be a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). All this will be because of Jehovah his God, the Holy One of Israel, who will have glorified the Messiah with his own self (cf. John 17:4-5; Acts 3:13-15), having received him "up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16) (5).

Vv. 6-13 – "Seek Ye Jehovah While He May Be Found"

These verses are among the better-known verses in Isaiah. It would be impossible to number the sermons for which they have served as the text. This familiarity is not bred by the fact that they appeal to preachers, but by the fact that preachers believe that they contain needed lessons for their hearers.

In light of what Jehovah has done for the salvation of the Jews and Gentiles, Isaiah now urgently calls upon both to **"Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found**." This call certainly includes the exiles in Babylon, but it goes far beyond that. To seek Jehovah is to inquire after him and his will with care and concern (cf. Amos 5:4, 6, 14). However, the clause, **while he may be found**, indicates a time limit. Today the door is open; tomorrow it may be closed (Hos. 5:6; Luke 13:25). Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 4:7) (6).

The wicked and the unrighteous are not different levels of evil. It is repetition for the sake of emphasis. Each acts contrary to God's char-

acter and will. Each is a rebel against the legal and moral law of God. Each is to forsake his mode of life. A general promise of forgiveness of sin upon repentance and amendment of life was first given to Israel through Solomon (2 Chron. 7:14). The doctrine is largely preached by the prophets, but is nowhere more distinctly and emphatically laid down than in this place. God's will is to "multiply pardon (abundantly pardon)," if man will only turn to him (7).

The word "for" occurs four times in the following verses giving four reasons to seek Jehovah and changes one's ways. "**1) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. 2) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thought than your thoughts.**" Though man is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27), yet the nature of God in every way infinitely transcends that of man. Both the thoughts and the acts of God surpass man's understanding. Men find it hard to pardon those who have offended them; God can pardon, and "pardon abundantly." Men cannot conceive of coming changes, when they pass certain limits. God knows assuredly what changes are approaching, since they are his doing. Man makes an egregious mistake when he "[thinks] that [God is] altogether such a one as [he]" (Psa. 50:21). We need to turn, seek God, and walk in his ways (8-9).

3) (For) the rain and the snow are God's ministers (Ps. 148:8), and go forth from him, just as his word does. They have an appointed work to do, and do not return to him until they have accomplished it. Delitzsch translates, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, except it hath watered the earth," etc. The writer is apparently aware, as is the writer of Ecclesiastes, that the water that falls from heaven in the shape of rain returns in the shape of vapor (see Eccles. 1:7). **So shall my word be**. God's word is creative. With the utterance the result is achieved. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6; comp. Ps. 148:5). **But it shall accomplish**; rather, *unless it has accomplished*. There is a mixture of two constructions, "It shall not return void," and "It shall not return unless it has accomplished," etc. **It**

shall prosper. Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God has a prosperous course. It is endued with life from God. The special "word" which the prophet has here in mind is the promise, so frequently given, of deliverance from Babylon and return in peace and joy to Palestine. But he carries his teaching beyond the immediate occasion, for the benefit of the people of God in all ages (10-11).

4) For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace (comp. ch. 35:10; 40:9–11; 43:3–6, 19–21, etc.). A strong contrast is frequently drawn between the exodus from Babylon and that from Egypt. On the former occasion all was hurry, alarm, disquiet, danger. The later exodus will be accompanied with "peace" and "joy" (see ch. 51:9–16, etc.). (For the fulfillment, see Ezra 1, 2, and 7, 8.) **The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing**. All nature shall rejoice at their deliverance, especially the noblest and the grandest parts of nature—"the mountains and the hills." Isaiah's admiration of mountains continually reveals itself throughout the work (ch. 5:25; 13:2, 4; 14:25; 22:5; 30:17, 25; 34:3; 40:4, 9, 12; 42:11, 15, etc.). It is quite in his manner to speak of nature as bursting forth into singing (ch. 35:2; 44:23, 49:13). **All the trees of the field shall clap** their **hands**. The metaphor is not found elsewhere in Isaiah, but appears in Ps. 98:8 (12).

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree. "Briars and thorns" were to overgrow the unfruitful vineyard, according to ch. 5:6; and to cover the land of God's people, according to ch. 32:13. This would be literally the case to a large extent, while the land was allowed to lie waste. The literal meaning is not, however, the whole meaning, or even the main meaning, here. "Briars and thorns" represent a general state of wretchedness and sin. The "fir" and "myrtle" represent a happy external condition of life, in which men "do righteously." **It shall be to the Lord for a name**. This "regenerated creation" will show forth the glory of God to mankind at large, and "get him a name" among them (comp. ch. 63:12; Jer. 13:11). **For an everlasting sign**. It will also be to God himself an enduring sign of the covenant of peace which he has made with his people, not to hide his face from them any more, but to have mercy on them "with everlasting kindness" (ch. 54:7–10). Other signs may be cut off or fail, but the deliverance of the Jews

from Babylon and the Servant's deliverance of the redeemed from among all nations stands, and will ever stand, as testimonies to Jehovah's being and power (13).

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Consolation for the Rejected; A Rebuke of the Blind Watchmen

Vv. 1-8 – Consolation for Foreigners and Eunuchs

Although we have followed Haley's headings and subheadings, I am inclined to depart from this one. This section is not so much pointed at special groups as much as it emphasizes the opening of the kingdom to all nations and peoples. Isaiah's announcement that foreigners would join God's family must have rattled the Jewish cage. More than likely it angered many of them who were exceedingly ethnocentric. It was one thing to suggest that the nations would one day obtain blessing from their relationship with God's people, but it was quite another to assert that they would stand before God on equal spiritual footing. However, this was not the first time and would not be the last time that Isaiah advanced such an idea. Isaiah first called his people to righteous living in light of their relationship with God. He then reassured foreigners and eunuchs that God had not forgotten them and in fact would bless them beyond their hopes.

God's salvation was coming and his people needed to live in keeping with it. Even as his righteousness would be revealed they needed to live justly and do righteousness. Isaiah's words parallel the challenge of John the Baptizer and of Jesus to prepare for the imminent arrival of God's kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:7). Blessing was pronounced upon those who so lived and held fast to that path. The representative action was keeping the Sabbath and his hand from doing any evil. He would single out the Sabbath again in 56:4, 6; 58:13-14). Why would Isaiah single out the Sabbath? Scripture does not tell us the reason, but it could be

that the Sabbath clearly indentifies the covenant lifestyle.[212] Keep in mind that while in captivity the people could not keep many of God's laws. For example, they could not offer proper sacrifices because they were separated from the temple and the altar in Jerusalem. It was this absence from the temple that gave rise to the synagogue. There they could observe the Sabbath to the extent possible and to the extent permitted. After all, they were slaves in Babylon and their masters might not be inclined to permit them to take off every seventh day (1-2).

Isaiah now singles out two groups – eunuchs and foreigners. First, Isaiah urges the eunuchs not to be discouraged; God would reward their faithfulness. God was looking for those would keep the Sabbath, choose that in which God delighted, and hold fast his covenant. While the eunuch believed that he would not enjoy God's lasting blessing to the same extent others would, Isaiah assures them that as faithful followers they would receive an everlasting name that would not disappear.[213] Eunuchs would produce no earthly families, but they would enjoy all the blessings of God's heavenly family. A name given to sons and daughters can be cut off, but a name that Jehovah gives to a mem-

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[212] The Sabbath was sacred to Jehovah; as Creator he rested on the seventh day following the six days of creation. To the Jew the Sabbath was a reminder of the power by which Jehovah had delivered the nation from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:15). The Sabbath day was a sign between Jehovah and the children of Israel that he had sanctified them unto himself as his special possession (Exod. 31:12-17; Ezek. 20:12). Thus observance of the Sabbath signified recognition of Jehovah's power in creation, in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and in their special relationship to him.

[213] There were restrictions regarding physically defective priests (Lev. 21:16-23). Physically defective or deformed priests were not allowed to function as priests by offering sacrifices. The abnormalities listed are probably examples rather than a complete list (cf. a comparable list of animal defects in 22:20-25). The ceremonial wholeness of the Levitical system found physical expression in wholeness and normality.

But handicapped priests were assured of their share not only of the holy food (the priests' portions of the fellowship offerings), but also from the most holy food (the priests' portions of all standard offerings) (Lev. 21:22).

ber of his spiritual family cannot be cut off. Only God can blot it out of his book. The account of the Ethiopian nobleman in Acts 8 indicates that it was not uncommon for a eunuch to respond to Jehovah's invitation to worship in Jerusalem (3-5).

Having addressed the eunuchs, Isaiah turns to the foreigners. The faithful foreigners are those who minister unto Jehovah, love his name, are his servants, keep the Sabbath day without profaning it, and hold fast his covenant. These he will bring to his holy mountain, make them joyful in his house of prayer, and accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices. Clearly faithfulness is more important than bloodlines.

Jehovah has a special interest in the outcasts of Israel, but his love extends beyond them to include the outcasts of the Gentiles as well. "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear m voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16), Gentiles responded in great numbers to his invitation (6-8).

Vv. 9-12 – A Rebuke of the Blind Watchmen

Commentators hold two different views on the text from 56:9 to 57:21. The issue is the time factor. Is Isaiah addressing Judah after the exile or is he looking back to his own generation before the Babylonian captivity? The text is difficult to harmonize with the former view. The strongest argument for the former view is the character and conduct of the nobles and rulers who were the leaders during the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls. Nehemiah records that they had money but that they were given to greed and usury (Neh. 5:7. In addition to that, they failed to pay their tithes, forsook the house of God, and desecrated the Sabbath (Neh. 13:10-18). However, they were never spoken of as watchmen or shepherds.

The evidence in Isaiah is far stronger for the view that Isaiah has turned from prophesying of the captivity, the return under Cyrus, and the coming of the Messiah, to speak to the people of his own day, summarizing the causes that will lead to the captivity. The portrayal of watchmen and shepherds who fail in their responsibility, giving them-

selves to drink (56:9-12), fits the period before the captivity, as does the charge that the people are children of sorcery, adultery, and harlotry. Finally, there is no record of a general idolatry (57:3-8) or the sending of ambassadors (57:9) after the return.

The people and land are ripe for invasion. The wild beasts of field and forest are invited to come and devour. Jeremiah adds information of that which is to be devoured. He declares that God has given his dearly beloved into the hand of the enemies because they had become a lion against him, a condition for which their shepherds were responsible (Jer. 12:7-10; Ezek. 34:5). Thus it is God's people who are to be devoured, *i.e.*, taken captive.

Isaiah, as God's spokesman, also places responsibility on the watchmen or shepherds. How dire is the situation when those whose responsibility it is to watch are blind! They cannot see the dangers; they are without knowledge of Jehovah and their responsibilities to him. They are all dumb[214] dogs. They cannot "speak" – cannot bark to warn of danger even if they recognized it. One reason for their silence is that they are given to dreaming, lying down, and sleeping. Even when they are awake they are too busy being greedy, attending to and concerned only with their own gain. They are at ease in Zion, putting the evil day far away and living in a fool's paradise of revelry (Amos 6:1-7). Sadly, these are the shepherds (9-11).

Isaiah has already pronounced a woe upon those who give themselves to drink (5:11), to the men in high places (5:22-23), to the rulers, prophets, and priests who, staggering under its influence, err in judgment (28:7-8; cf. Mic. 2:11). He now points at those who cover their woes and stimulate false hopes through drink, living only from day to day, with no concern for the future.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

[214] "Dumb" is not used in the sense of intelligence, but of the inability to speak. The ESV translates "silent dogs."[214]

A Rebuke of the Wickedness of Isaiah's Day

Vv. 1-2 – "Blessed Are the Dead Who Die in the Lord"

Isaiah denounced the injustice that was rampant in Judah. Not only did righteous people suffer and even die unjustly, no one seemed to notice or, if they noticed, they did not care. Another thing that was not noticed was that the death of the righteous protected them from future evil (1) and enabled them to enter into peace and rest (see Rev. 14:13) (2). This was surely more than a reference to the grave, although "bed" may have been such a reference. For example, David said, 'If I make my bed in Sheol behold thou art there" (Psa. 139:8). It must have been at least a hint of the life to come when God shall right all wrongs. This concept of the future foreshadows the full revelation in the New Testament.

Vv. 3-13 – Idolatry and Faithlessness Severely Rebuked

Isaiah's language becomes severe as he denounces the people's idolatry. He described them as children of sorcery, adultery, and prostitution, and as rebels and liars (3-4). They continued the sins of past generations.

He described the idolaters' wickedness (5-10). Their lust burned everywhere and they sacrificed their children to false gods. They built worship sites on hills all over the land and even brought idols and other pagan symbols into their homes (5-8).

The sexual imagery of v. 8 probably suggests that fertility rites were part of the people's idolatry. The people had abandoned their true love – the Lord Jehovah – to worship idols.[215] Any form of idolatry erodes faith in God; therefore, it is only natural that the idolatry described by the prophet has led Judah to look for help from someone other than Jehovah. They went to some unknown king with oil and sprayed themselves with perfume to become more attractive. The charge that they had debased themselves even unto Sheol shows the depth to which

[215] This is a dominant theme of the prophet Hosea.

they had fallen in their departure from God (9). Isaiah observed that the people had actually worn themselves out with all their idolatry, but still did not repent (10).

Jehovah questions why the people did not fear him, asking whom they did fear in preference to him. They had lived a lie before him by practicing false righteousness, they had not remembered him in times of crisis, and they had not laid to heart the power of God to deliver. God had kept his peace by restraining judgment against them, but they still did not fear (reverence) him. His longsuffering had availed nothing (11).

Isaiah reminds the people that their own works will not profit them ("the arm of flesh will fail you"). Indeed when they cry out and gather those who are to deliver them, it will be so ineffectual that the slightest wind will blow them away. Isaiah concludes by holding out hope – "He that taketh refuge in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain (12-13).

Vv. 14-21 – The Condescending Love of God

"And he will say." The "he" must be Jehovah, indicated by the reference to "my people." Jehovah calls for a highway to be prepared on which his people can return to him (14). Isaiah was the construction foreman to see that every obstacle was cleared. The language is similar to prior highway imagery (35:8; 40:3-4). The construction job can be more fully appreciated when we understand Israel's topography.

Isaiah describes the stark contrast between God's nature and God's expectation for humanity. The Lord was high, exalted, and holy, but he condescended to dwell with the contrite and lowly in spirit. He looked specifically for those who humbled themselves and recognized their need for him. He will revive them, *i.e.*, give them strength (15).

God's judgment was a response to the people's persistent sin. Nevertheless, he assured his people that his anger would not remain forever. "For my name's sake will I defer my anger" (48:9). If this were not so, man's whole inner life would be overwhelmed by hopeless despair,

and God's purpose in making man would fail. Consequently, let man "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Pet. 3:15) (16).

Covetousness is now added to the sins of idolatry (see Col. 3:5), preferring foreign kings to Jehovah, lies, and forgetting God. The greedy oppressors of Isaiah's day are described by Micah as cannibals who skin people alive and eat them; who spend their time thinking up ways to get that which belongs to another (Mic. 2:1-2; 3:1-4). For this conduct, God smote them.[216] In spite of Jehovah's judgments, the nation continued in its backsliding way (17).

Jehovah had seen their evil ways, even their continuing in their rebellion, but even so Jehovah will heal them. No time is stated for the healing, but it is obviously after the time that God's wrath is satiated. He will lead them, directing their paths aright (40:11; 52:12). He will restore the spiritual comforts that have been withdrawn because of sin. While mourning is often associated with death, it is more likely here that it is an expression of grief over the condition of the nation (cf. Ezek. 9:4) – they mourn over their sinful ways (cf. 22:12) (18).

As part of their healing Jehovah will create the fruit of the lips (*create* means to bring something new into existence). The Lord will make it possible to say *peace, peace* (or *perfect peace*). That peace will be for those both far and near. This can refer to those still in the homeland and those in exile, but in light of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament teaching it may also refer to Jews (those near) and Gentiles (those far off) (see Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:17) (19).

While the redeemed will enjoy healing and peace, there is no rest for the wicked who, like the sea, will have no rest and cast up mire and dirt. It may be that the wicked Jews are in the prophet's mind, but it is a perfect description of all of the wicked in their restless and unregenerate condition. The final statement is absolute: "There is no rest for the wicked" (20-21).

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[216] The singular in the text probably refers to the nation collectively. Micah's language is certainly plural.

SECTION THREE

National Sins, Redemption by Jehovah, and Future Glory

CHAPTER FIFTY EIGHT

Right and Wrong Observances of Fasts and Sabbaths

An Introductory Word

Because of the close relationship between chapters 57-59, it is difficult to know where one section ends and a new section begins. It is also difficult to place this section in any particular point in history. The proposed times range from Isaiah's writing of the transgressions and hope of the people of his own day, to both "Deutero-Isaiah" writing in the captivity and "Trito-Isaiah" writing in the period following the exile. Since, as we have seen in the introduction, the evidence of the unity of the prophecy and Isaiah's authorship of it all is so overwhelming, there can be no real dispute with the conclusion that Isaiah wrote these chapters and is addressing the sins and hope of the people of his day. While not much is said about the Jews conduct during the exile which makes it difficult to say that the abuses Isaiah here condemns were prevalent at that period, we do have the statement of one of Isaiah's contemporaries, Micah, "For it is an evil time" (Micah 2:3).

In prior sections Isaiah has discussed the captivity to come, the assured return of the remnant, salvation in the Servant, and the glory of future Zion. He now turns his attention to present conditions. To the extent the time can be determined, perhaps the most reasonable suggestion is that it is at some time after Sennacherib's defeat and return to his homeland (ch. 37) and the prophecy of the Babylonian exile (ch. 39). If so, then Isaiah has collected various prophecies from his earlier ministry and preserved them in the last chapters of his book. They are placed at this point because they relate to the Babylonian captivity that is the subject of chapters 40-66.

Vv. 1-2 – Cry Out! Spare Not!

As the last prophecy of the second book contained all the three elements of prophetic addresses—reproach, threat, and promise—so this, the first prophecy of the third book, cannot open in any other way than with a rehearsal of one of these. The prophet receives the commission to appear as the preacher of condemnation; and while Jehovah is giving the reason for this commission, the preaching itself commences.

Isaiah is charged to **"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet."** The cry is to be with full throat (Ps. 115:7; 149:6). It is to be heard because it is a voice of warning. Delitzsch says of the word "**trumpet,**" that it means "with all the strength of the voice, lifting up the voice like the *shōphâr* (not a trumpet, which is called חֲצֹצְרָה, nor in fact any metallic instrument, but a bugle or signal horn, like that blown on new year's day (see Ps. 81:4), i.e., in a shrill shouting tone. With a loud voice that must be heard, with the most unsparing publicity." He does not speak merely of the stretch of the voice, but means by it that keenness and severity of language which hypocrites especially need, as if God were throwing thunderbolts against them from heaven; for they are delighted with their vices, if they are not severely reproved and dragged forth to the light, or rather if they are not violently thrown down.

The message is to "**declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.**" In spite of their transgressions they still hypocritically seek the Lord; they are eager to go through the formalities, they profess to delight in the knowledge of his ways; they act as if they have not forsaken Jehovah and feign delight in drawing near to him (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8). In return, they ask for and expect God to give them righteous judgments, but "they know not what they ask." Righteous judgment includes punishment for their transgressions (1-2).

Truly they need a preacher who will "spare not." When he adds, *Spare not,* it is a mode of expression very frequently employed by Hebrew writers, such as, "I cry, and am not silent." (Psalm 22:2) It is equivalent to a common expression, "Cry without sparing." We have

said that the Prophet does not speak of the mere sound of the voice, but means a severe and harsh reproof, which is very necessary to be sharply used towards hypocrites. For instance, if the prophets merely spoke of the Law of the Lord, and showed what is the rule of a good and holy life, and recommended the worship of God, and likewise reproved vices, but without employing any vehemence of language, what impression would that produce on hypocrites whose conscience is lulled in such a manner that they cannot be aroused but by applying spurs? And so a simple manner of teaching would not be enough, unless they were sharply attacked, and the thunderbolts of words were launched against them.

Vv. 3-12 – Hypocritical Formalism Versus True Fasting

The people want to know why they are in trouble when they seem to be doing what God has commanded. They **fasted** and **humbled** themselves, but they feared that God had not **seen it** or **noticed**. Apparently they thought that by going through the "motions" of religion (without any inward reality of faith) they would be blessed (3a).

God responds to their expressed concern by pointing out that he was more interested in their obedience than their rituals (see 1 Sam. 15:22). Unfortunately they, like many people, had confused rituals with relationship, outward acts with true obedience. Their fasts did not alter their poor relationship with others. They were disregarding other peoples' needs by exploiting their employees (cf. Deut. 24:14-15; James 5:1-6) and by **quarreling** and fighting. Therefore their prayers would not **be heard,** for their kind of **fasting** was not what the Lord accepted. Their hearts, not just their **heads,** needed to bow before **the Lord** (3b-5).

Fasting was to encourage a person to respond positively to God's commands. In the Old Testament only one fast was commanded – the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31). So the Lord reminded the people that they should be just (Isa. 58:6) and openhanded with those in need-**the hungry** (cf. v. 10), **the poor ... the naked** (v. 7). They were to **loose the bonds of the wickedness, undo the bands of the yoke,**

let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke." The Israelites were to consider themselves members of one family who at one time had been slaves in Egypt. Therefore they were not to neglect each other. When someone shared with one in need, it was a reminder that everything he owned belonged to the Lord. There is a bitter irony in Isaiah's words, just as when the ancients said, "not eating is a natural fast, but abstaining from sin is a spiritual fast." During the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans there was a general emancipation of the slaves of Israelite descent carried out; but as soon as the Chaldeans were gone, the masters fetched their liberated slaves back into servitude again (Jer. 34:8–22).

The prophet now proceeds to point out the reward of divine grace, which would follow such a fast as this, consisting of self-renouncing, self-sacrificing love; and in the midst of the promise he once more reminds of the fact, that this love is the condition of the promise. This divides the promises into two. The middle promise is linked on to the first; the morning dawn giving promise of the "perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). The first series of promises we have in vv. 8, 9a: **[8]Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of Jehovah shall by thy rearward. [9]Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and he will say, Here I am.** The love of God is called "light" in contrast with His wrath; and a quiet cheerful life in God's love is so called in contrast with a wild troubled life spent in God's wrath. This life in God's love has its dawn and its noonday. When it is night both within and around a man, and he is awakened by the love of God to a reciprocity of love; then the love of God, like the rising sun, opens a way through the man's dark night and overcomes the darkness of wrath, but so gradually that the sky within is at first only streaked as it were with the red of the morning dawn, the herald of the sun. A second figure of a promising character follows. The man is sick unto death; but when the love of God stimulates him to reciprocal love, he is filled with new vigor, and his recovery springs up suddenly; he feels within him a new life working through with energetic force like a miraculous springing up of luxuriance from the earth, or of growing and flowering plants.

Before Jehovah's promises reach their climax, Isaiah once more lays down the conditions upon which they rest: [9b] "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly; [10]and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity be as the noonday; [11]and Jehovah will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. [12]And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." The conditions are:

1. **Take away the yoke** – see v. 6 – loose the bonds of wickedness and undo the bands of the yoke (9b).

2. **Take away the pointing of the finger** – pointing at one in scorn (9b).

3. **Draw out thy soul to the hungry** – not merely giving bread, but giving sympathy and compassion with it (9b).

If the people meet these conditions, God will bless them:

1. **Then light will rise in their darkness**, often a picture of blessing (10).

2. T**heir obscurity will be as the noonday** (10). This appears to be related to No. 1. The word translated "obscurity" is the common Hebrew word for darkness. It is used sometimes figuratively for "judgment." Thus, it could also refer to a termination of God's wrath (see 51:21-23).

3. **Jehovah will guide them continually** (11).

4. **Jehovah would satisfy their soul in dry places** (11) – comfort their souls in times of spiritual drought.

5. **Jehovah will make their dry bones strong** (11) – "bones" refers to the whole body, therefore God will prepare them for battle. This could and in the context is, I suggest, spiritual warfare (see Ezekiel 37).

6. **Jehovah will make them like a watered garden and a spring whose waters never fail** – satisfaction and fertility (11).

7. **Their offspring will rebuild the waste places** – this may refer to either the physical rebuilding after the return from captivity or to the rebuilding of the spiritual waste places of Isaiah's time. Given God's conditions for the blessings, the latter seems more probable. Moreover, a spiritual remnant does raise up the foundations on which every generation builds. They repair the breaches in the walls of Zion and restore the old paths, the good way in which to travel and dwell (cf. Jer. 6:16).

Vv. 13 – 14 — Proper Observance of the Sabbath

The Sabbath observance needed both spiritualizing and increased strictness. From 2 Chron. 36:21 we learn that the sabbatical years had been little observed during the later Jewish kingdom; and it would seem from the present passage (comp. Jer. 17:21–23) that even the observance of the Sabbath itself had been neglected. Not that the neglect was total. The sacrifices proper to the Sabbath were duly offered—the "solemn assembly" was duly called and attended (ch. 1:13); but during the rest of the day business flowed in its usual course—the complete sanctification of the entire day was set aside. We find a similar laxity prevalent after the return from the Captivity (Neh. 10:31; 13:15, 16) (13).

Then shall communion with Jehovah become a real pleasure. The acts of worship shall not be done merely from a sense of duty, because commanded, but because they are congenial to the soul of the worshipper. A right use of the Sabbath will help to form in men habits of devotion, which will make religion a joy and a delight to them. **I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth;** *i.e.* "I will give thee a prominent position in the earth, and cause thee to occupy its high places, and bear rule over many nations." Something more than a "taking triumphal possession of Palestine" is evidently pointed at (see

Deut. 32:13). **And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father**. The world itself was the "heritage of Jacob," since in him and his seed "all the families of the earth were to be blessed" (Gen. 28:14). Israel, having laid aside its formalism, and turned to God sincerely, keeping fast and Sabbath as God would have them kept, not in just the letter, but also in the spirit, would enter upon the promised heritage, and occupy the position originally assigned to it. Israel's rejection of the gospel made the mixed Christian church the inheritress of the old promises. It will happen, "for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it" (14).

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

Sin: The Wall of Separation

Vv. 1-8 – Jehovah's Charge Against the People

In chapter 58 Isaiah was charged to declare unto the people their transgressions. He spoke of their desecration of the Sabbath and their disregard for the law of fasting. Now he continues his task by rebuking the people's sin of wickedly ignoring God's law in general. The book of Micah is perhaps the finest commentary on chapter 59.

Isaiah begins by declaring the reason that the people had not recognized the salvation so often promised by the Lord. His hand was not shortened and his ear was not heavy. His hand could save and his ear could hear. It was not the Lord's fault; it was the fault of the people. Their iniquities had created a wall of separation from God and their sins had hid his face from God so that he would not hear (1-2).

There is no part of the body that has not participated in the sin (3, 4, 6, 7). Their hand and fingers were stained with blood; their lips and tongues spoke lies and other evil things, and never spoke with justice or integrity; their minds concentrated on evil plans that gave birth to evil acts; their hands held acts of violence while their feet ran to sin; they walked in crooked paths and thus did not know the path of peace. There was apparently no depth to which they would not sink (3-8).

Vv. 9-15a – The Prophet's Reply: A Confession of Wickedness

They were not worried. They trusted in **vanity** (4). This is the word for "chaos" in Gen. 1:2. The NIV translates "empty arguments"; the ESV "empty pleas"; the NKJ "empty words." It is often used to designate idols and the futility of idol worship. Their lives had no spiritual substance.

In vv. 9-11 the prophet includes himself when speaking of the people. Using first-person plural pronouns (**us ... . we ... . our**), he identified with the people (cf. 6:5). Israel was so corrupt spiritually, without **justice** (cf. 59:4, 11, 14-15) **and righteousness,** that it was as if they were in **darkness** and were **blind** and **dead.** As a result, the oppressed were angry **like** growling **bears** and moaned **like doves.** They wanted **justice** and help **but** found **none** (v. 11). Isaiah confessed that the people were noted for their **many sins,** deliberate **rebellion** (cf. 1:5; 58:1) **against the LORD**, lying, injustice, and dishonesty (12-15a).

Vv. 15b-21 – Jehovah's Response: Vengeance and Deliverance

Whatever distress Israel may have suffered at the hands of the heathen, the greater part of her suffering was self-inflicted. What God saw (no justice) did not please him. Isaiah has now worked his way through the keen reproach, of darkness of character, and of mournful confession that has brought up the apostasy of the great mass in all the darker colors before his mind and from the fact that the confession proceeds from those who are ready for salvation. And now he comes to the description of the approaching judgment, out of whose furnace the church of the future is to spring. Jehovah saw, and "it was evil in His eyes."[217] That which was right (which He loves, Isa. 61:8; Ps. 37:28) had vanished from the life of His nation. He saw that there was no man there, no man possessing either the disposition or the power to stem this corruption (as in Jer. 5:1, cf., 1 Sam. 4:9, 1 Kings 2:2). He was astonished that there was no one to step in between God and the people, and by his intercession to press this disastrous condition of the people upon the attention of God (see Isa. 53:12); no one to form a wall against the

[217] An antiquated phrase from the Pentateuch, e.g., Gen. 38:10.

coming ruin; no one to appease the wrath, like Aaron (Num. 17:12, 13) or Phinehas (Num. 25:7) (15b-16).

Because the nation was so utterly and deeply corrupt, Jehovah had equipped himself for judicial interposition. The equipment was already completed; only the taking of vengeance remained to be effected. Jehovah saw no man at his side who was either able or willing to help him in opposition to the prevailing abominations, or to support his cause. Then his own arm became his help, and his righteousness his support (cf., Isa. 63:5); so that he did not desist from the judgment to which he felt himself impelled. The armor that Jehovah puts on is now described. According to the scriptural view, Jehovah is never unclothed; but the free radiation of His own nature shapes itself into a garment of light. Light is the robe He wears (Ps. 104:2). When the prophet describes this garment of light as changed into a suit of armor, this must be understood in the same sense as when the apostle in Eph. 6 speaks of a Christian's panoply. Just as there the separate pieces of armor represent the manifold self-manifestations of the inward spiritual life, so here the pieces of Jehovah's armor stand for the manifold self-manifestations of his holy nature, which consists of a mixture of wrath and love. He does not arm himself from any outward armor; the armor is his infinite wrath and his infinite love, and the might in which he manifests himself to his creatures is his infinite will. He puts on righteousness as a coat of mail, so that his appearance on every side is righteousness. On his head he sets the helmet of salvation. For the ultimate object for which he goes into the conflict is the redemption of the oppressed, salvation as the fruit of the victory gained by righteousness. Over the coat of mail he draws on clothes of vengeance as a tabard[218] and wraps himself in zeal as in a war-cloak. The inexorable justice of God is compared to an impenetrable brazen coat of mail; his joyful salvation, to a helmet that glitters from afar; his vengeance, with its manifold inflictions of punishment, to the clothes worn above the coat of mail; and his wrathful zeal with the fiery-looking garments. No weapon is mentioned; only his own arm procures him help. What will

[218] A sleeveless coat or jacket consisting only of front and back pieces with a hole for the head and usually made of leather.

Jehovah do, when he has armed himself with justice, salvation, vengeance and zeal? He will carry out a severe and general retributive judgment upon his adversaries and enemies. Both Jew (adversaries) and Gentiles (enemies) seem to be included. This is suggested by reference to "the islands," the regions that are inhabited by "the peoples," foreigners or Gentiles (15b-18).

The result will be that God's adversaries and enemies from the west to the rising of the sun will fear his name and glory. The second half of the verse is more difficult. If the text is followed, Jehovah will come against his enemies **as a rushing stream** driven by his own breath. If the margin is followed, it is the enemy that will come like a mighty flood. Whether it is Jehovah's direct act or the raising up of one to execute his judgment, the lesson is the same – God is in control (19).

In the Old Testament the next of kin was a **redeemer** who had the right and responsibility to recover forfeited property or to purchase the freedom of a relative who had fallen into slavery. Isaiah uses the word in its fullest sense. At least twelve times in chapters 40-66 Jehovah is referred to as Israel's Redeemer. In this instance, however, it is the Servant-Messiah to whom reference is made. He has been promised many times and his work has been well described. This is confirmed by Paul who applies this passage to Christ in Rom. 11:26-27 (20).[219]

The Redeemer has come; Jehovah makes the covenant ("the sure mercies of David" (see 55:3). Man either accepts its terms and enters into it, or rejects it. Established in the Servant (42:6; 49:8), it shall not be removed (54:10). The pledge **my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart of thy mouth,** is spoken to the Redeemer. Jehovah has put his Spirit upon the

[219] Isaiah's use of coming "to Zion" and Paul's use of "come out of Zion" has given rise to discussions by commentators. Without discussing all of the comments, the apparent contradiction is easy to resolve. Isaiah speaks of the Redeemer coming to his own to offer salvation first to them (Matt. 15:24; John 1:11). When they rejected him he turned from them to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46-48; 18:6). This is Paul's point. Jesus came to Zion to the Jews and from Zion to the Gentiles.

Redeemer (cf. 42:1; 61:1), and by his teaching Jehovah has supplied the Redeemer words (see 50:4). The Redeemer will make no compromise; he will hold fast the truth as he has received it from Jehovah. The Redeemer **shall see his seed**, his spiritual offspring (53:10). "They shall come and shall declare his righteousness. Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it" (Psa. 22:30-31). There will always be a seed (a remnant) holding faithfully to his word, passing it on from one generation to the next. This promise has been fulfilled in the Christ who received his words from the Father, in the gospel, and in the church of Christ, the Kingdom.

CHAPTER SIXTY

Glorious Zion!

In this chapter and the two that follow there is not a single criticism or rebuke of the people. In these chapters Jehovah reveals the future glory of Zion, the work of his hands. Isaiah has already announced that when the people are free to go home that they "shall mount up with wings as eagles" (40:31). Zion will be glorious in their eyes, but it is only under the Redeemer (59:20) that the glowing description of chapters 60-62 can be fulfilled. The exaltation of Zion is in sharp contrast to the lowly condition of the people (chs. 58-59). From the ashes of physical Jerusalem that fades into the background, rises the splendor of the new city under the Messiah. Isaiah extols the glory of Jehovah's holy city (v. 14) and, as he does so, weaves into the picture images from various realms of creation – light, man, animals, God, incense, birds, and the majestic trees of the forest.

Vv. 1-3 – Made Glorious through the Light of Jehovah's Presence

Many parents have awakened their children with the call, "Rise and shine." That is now the prophets call to God's children, "**Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee**." The light that now shines upon them is Jehovah's glory. Isaiah had told of a time when the world would be covered in darkness and the people in gross darkness. The dawning of Jehovah's glory would attract na-

tions that will come to learn of Jehovah's ways and to walk in them (2:2-3; cf. 40:5), and their kings who, impressed by the glory, would worship Jehovah (cf. 49:7; 52:15)(1-3).

Vv. 4-9 – Made Glorious Through the Return of Her Children

Now that God's children have arisen, they are called on to **Lift up thine eyes round about, and see**." They will see their sons and daughters (converts, spiritual seed) gathering together. The sight of the gathering children,[220] who bring new wealth will bring radiant faces and thrilled and enlarged hearts to Jehovah's people. That wealth is described by reference to nomadic traders and their goods as they proclaim Jehovah's praise. They come dedicating all that they are and have, including their wealth that Jehovah **accept[s] on [his] altar**. God will **glorify the house of [his] glory** by receiving Abraham's cast-off descendants and their gifts. All are Jehovah's creations, and creations' best belongs to him.

Vv. 10-14 – Made Glorious Through Offering

And foreigners shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee. Cyrus aided in the supply of timber for the construction of the second temple (Ezra 3:7). Artaxerxes sanctioned the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. (Neh. 1:3; 2:5–8). However, there is a greater meaning beyond the literal one. "Strangers" of all kinds assisted in building and enlarging the walls of the Zion as it spread over the world. **Their kings shall minister unto thee**. All of this is occurring because the day of God's wrath had ended and the day of mercy had come (10).

In order for the wealth to come into Zion, its gates shall not be closed either day or night.[221] Kings shall serve it, and those nations and kingdoms that will not serve Zion will perish and be utterly wasted (cf.

[220] The **abundance of the sea** may be the nations made restless by Jehovah or a reference to the wealth that they bring with them.

[221] See Rev. 21:25. Both of these passages relate to the church militant, not heaven or the church triumphant. When the redeemed have passed through the gates of heaven they shall indeed be closed (see Matt. 25:10).

Zech. 14:16-19) (11-12). In a strongly Messianic chapter Micah strikes similar tones, saying that Jehovah would "execute vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations which hearkened not" (Micah 5:15). Obviously, the time following the exile is not in view.

Trees are brought into the city, not for building but for beauty, and God will make the place of his feet[222] glorious. Jerusalem-Zion, which for so long has been afflicted and despised, shall now be honored by her oppressors. They shall recognize her relationship to God and bow at the soles of her feet. They shall do homage in honor of her God who has beautified her. And they shall call her "**The city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel**" (13-14).

Vv. 15-18 – Made Glorious Through Her Eternal Excellency

Because his people had forsaken him, Jehovah gave them up to their own ways (cf. 50:1; 54:6) as he had told them from the beginning that he would (2 Chron. 12:1, 5; 15:2). Because of the desolation no one lived in Zion and no man passed through her (cf. 33:8—9). Jehovah will now change this condition. He will make her an eternal excellency and a joy of generations. "Eternal" indicates a long time or period; Zion will last for an entire age through many generations. It is possible that it also looks beyond the Messianic stage into the home eternal (15).

Thou shalt also suck the milk of the nations. This unusual figure must be taken figuratively (cf. 49:23), possibly drawn from Deut. 33:19. While they are sustained and built up by the wealth of nations and kings from their breasts, she shall know that Jehovah is her Savior and sustainer. He is the Mighty One of Jacob, able to redeem, build, and sustain the new nation of Zion just as he built and cared for the Israel of Zion of old (16).

The nature of the materials that go into the building of Zion makes it precious in value and indestructible. The figurative prophecy is an in-

[222] The temple is referred to as "the footstool of our God" (1 Chron. 28:2), and the place of worship as "his footstool" (Psa. 99:5; 132:7). In worship we "look up" to him.

dication that God's house will progress from good to better: brass to gold, iron to silver, more precious wood than before, stones to iron. Everything is better and more precious than before (17).[223]

In the worldwide kingdom of peace ruled from Zion, **violence shall no more be heard in the land**. Those drawn to Zion from among the nations shall have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; they will learn war no more (2:2-4). There will be no desolation and destruction within the borders of Zion, for desolation and destruction pertain only to those who know not Jehovah and the joys of Zion. By contrast, those who have passed through the gates of Praise and dwell within the wall of Salvation will continue to praise him for his salvation and to practice peace instead of violence (18).

Vv. 19-22 – Made Glorious Through Jehovah's Everlasting Light

This chapter began with Jehovah's glorious light in his future kingdom (see also 24:23; 30:26). Jehovah now returns to that light. In the city described here the sun and moon contribute no light, for **Jehovah will be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory**. If the sun and the moon can contribute no light, what light can human wisdom and philosophy add? They can only add darkness and confusion. With Jehovah as the light the Sun and Moon shall no more go down.[224] Moreover, **mourning shall be ended** (19-20).

A city of Zion's nature demands citizens of a special character – they **shall be all righteous** (see Rev. 14:1-5). The righteous are to inherit Zion's land forever (cf. 57:13b); they shall never be driven out or cast off. Earlier Jehovah's vineyard had been left to destruction (5:1-7), but the citizens of his new city are identified as **the branch of my planting**, which relates them to the Root and Branch of Jesse, the rallying

[223] The word "better" occurs 13 times in Hebrews, indicating the superiority of spiritual Zion.

[224] "I have heard of a land On a far away strand/ In the Bible the story is told,/ Where cares never come, Never darkness nor gloom,/ And nothing shall ever grow old./ In that beautiful land On the far away strand,/ No storms with their blasts ever frown;/ The streets I am told, are paved with pure gold,/ And the sun, it shall never go down." F.A.F. White, "I Have Heard of a Land," stanza one and chorus.

point of the nations (11:1, 10). Through the Servant, Jehovah will accomplish this planting, the work of his hand, that he may be glorified (cf. 61:3) (21).

The number and strength of the citizens will be multiplied. Jehovah will hasten fulfillment in its time (cf. Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:7; Gal. 4:4). What has been promised will be done, for "the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (9:7) (22).

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Glorious Zion! (2)

Several commentators have suggested that chapter 60 relates to the outer glory of Zion while chapter 61 relates to her inner glory. In chapter 60 Jehovah is the speaker and declares "I will glorify the house of my glory (60:7); in chapter 61 the Servant is the speaker and through him Jehovah will bring inner beauty to his glorious city.

Vv. 1-3 – The Herald of Good Tidings

Although the word "Servant" is not mentioned in these verses, the similarity to prior Servant passages leaves little doubt as to the speaker's identity. While some commentators identify Isaiah as the speaker, it is not likely to be the case. The speaker's message and work far transcend those of a prophet, even the greatest of the prophets. The message and work are more characteristic of deity. In this case there is no doubt. When Jesus began his ministry, he read these verses in the synagogue and then said, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21).

The servant begins by declaring that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.[225] Peter declared that God anointed Christ "with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). Having announced this anointment and power, the Servant declares the cause: **because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland[226] for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness**. Notice these words carefully – the Servant is anointed not only to preach and proclaim, but also to bind and comfort. He was not only to speak; he was also to act and do. The end result sought was **that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified** (1-3).

Vv. 4-9 – The Mission and Blessing of the Redeemed

Those who have been blessed by the Servant's work are given a threefold task. They are to: 1) build the old wastes (waste

[225] Isaiah sees the Spirit as having a developing role in the work of the One to come – 11:2; 42:1; 48:16b; 49:8; 50:4.

[226] The basic meaning of פָּאַר in the Piel [Piel and Hithpael, below, are "stems" in the Hebrew language that affect the meaning of words.] is "to beautify/glorify." In the six instances of this, the subject of the verb is always God. The recipient is his child(ren), for example, 55:5; Ps 149:4, or his sanctuary (Ezr 7:27; Isa 60:7, 13). This thought is carried into the use of רַאְפ in the Hithpael (Isa 44:23; 49:3; 60:21; 61:3). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. This is the basis for the King James translation, "beauty for ashes." I prefer it because of its "beauty." "Beauty for ashes, gladness for tears,/ Sunshine for darkness, faith for our fears;/ Peace for our turmoil, concord for strife,/ Heaven at evening – then endless life!" *Beauty for Ashes*, Grant Colfax Tullar, stanza three.

places); 2) raise up the former desolations; and 3) repair the waste cities. The desolation that had laid Zion waste has occurred over many generations. The repairs are to include new boundaries. The old ones are too restricted for the new Zion. Isaiah's view here is a world-view (see 49:19-20) (4).

Strangers, people who were not related to the original citizens of Zion and who were not party to the covenants of the promise (Eph. 2:12), will contribute their part in building Zion. The language used is metaphorical – there is no evidence after the return from exile that foreigners fed the flocks, plowed the fields, or dressed the vineyards of the Jews. Indeed, spiritual Israel is not concerned with flocks or plowmen or vineyards. It is true that the Gentile converts helped to alleviate the physical needs of Jewish saints as the Jewish saints ministered to the spiritual needs of the Gentiles (Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; 9:12-15), but even that conduct fails to be broad enough to qualify for what is envisioned in this verse. The thought appears to be that the Jews and Gentiles will work together in building the new Zion (5).

New Zion will be priests and ministers of God. There will be no special priesthood apart from the citizens of the new Zion (1 Pet. 2:5). Neither will there be clergy and laity; each citizen will be charged with offering "service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Heb. 13:15). The priests and ministers are worthy of support and, as they come into the kingdom, dedicating all that they are and have, they will provide support (see comments on 60:4-9 and the passages listed in the paragraph above). To the extent that this language implies some lower social class for the nations, it is not implying that the Jews are to lord it over the nations. The day is coming

when the Jews will no more need to fear the nations. What the language does proclaim is that the day is coming when the abundance of the nations will be Israel's to enjoy and to take pride in. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* comments on this passage:

> A third contextual use of the root, eating well, indicates prosperity (Joel 2:26; Gen 45:18; 2 Kgs 18:31; Prov 24:13; Deut 8:3) or the lack of prosperity when eating does not satisfy (Mic 6:14). Closely related to this is the circumstance of eating what others earned as a symbol of victory (Isa 61:6) but others eating of it symbolizes defeat (65:22).

All through Isaiah Jehovah has proclaimed victory over the nations, not only in the sense of their defeat to free his people, but of leading them to salvation in the New Zion. Since it is the New Zion that is in view here, and given the prophecy discussed above (60:4-9), the concept seems to be that the Jewish converts will glory in and boast of the fact that the abundance of the nations will be theirs to enjoy because of their victory. History may seem to have suggested that the gods of the nations were greater than the God of Israel, but the further unfolding of history will make it abundantly clear that this was not and is not the case (5-6).

Instead of shame and dishonor, Israel shall have a double portion in which they shall rejoice. "Double" basically involves a doubling of an original item, whether it be 1) getting twice as much as originally, or 2) making a duplicate so as to have an exact copy, or 3) having a second item or person, a second rank or section. Thus Jacob's sons, on their second trip to Egypt took double the money they took on the first trip (Gen 43:15). In Zech 9:12 and here God promises Israel a double portion, which may mean a superabundance of blessing, or perhaps better the full blessing and inheritance as the firstborn heirs, that special place which the heir occupies in the father's household and in his plans. This double blessing will take place in their land that they possess, the new Zion where they shall have everlasting joy (7).

The shame of banishment will then be changed into an excess of joy, and honorable distinction. Jehovah will provide that joy because he loves justice and hates robbery with iniquity. He will give them their recompense in truth and make an everlasting covenant with them. That covenant will be a covenant of peace with his sanctuary in the midst of his people (see Ezek. 37:26) (8).

The seed of the godly will be recognized among the nations because they are different. The heathen may not accept the truth that guides the lives of the godly, but they will recognize the righteousness of their lives and the spirit of joy and peace that they possess. These are blessings that come only from above (9).

Vv. 10-11 – Zion's Burst of Praise!

It is Zion that now breaks forth in song rejoicing in Jehovah and being joyful in God. She is the recipient of the blessings described in vv. 1-3, and Jehovah has clothed her in garments of salvation and thrown over her the robe of righteousness. The filthy garments of the past have been cast off. To emphasize the beauty of Zion's glory Isaiah compares it with the attire of a groom and the adornment of the bride with jewels (10)

That which is achieved in Zion through the Servant will be Jehovah's work. Just as he causes the plants of the earth to sprout and grow and the seed sown in the garden to come forth, so shall he cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. In spite of all the nations' opposition, Jehovah will anoint the Servant with his spirit, redeem and glorify Zion, establish an everlasting covenant, and make his people known among the nations (11).

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

Salvation is Drawing Near

Vv. 1-5 – The New Name and Glory of Zion

Whom do men say that the speaker is in chapter 62? Some say that it is Jehovah; some, the Servant; others say it Isaiah or that it is uncertain. While each of these has its arguments, v. 6, where the speaker says, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls," seems to settle the issue in favor of Jehovah. Whichever is correct, the answer does not affect the end result of that which we have here – the word of Jehovah through the prophet revealing the Servant's work.

For Zion's sake, on her account and for her benefit, Jehovah will not hold his **peace**, nor will he **rest** until her **righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burneth**. Her righteousness is her vindication or justification; it rests upon her salvation through a Savior (the Servant). The righteousness and salvation, the work of Jehovah upon Zion, will be seen as a steadily beaming light from a lamp that will not go out (1).

Zion's righteousness will be seen by the nations, kings will see her glory, and the mouth of the Lord will give her a new name by which she shall be called. The identity of the **new name** is not made clear. What is clear is that in Israelite culture as well as in the entire ancient Near East, name and character were intimately associated. This is the reason for the importance attached to the naming of children (cf. 7:3, 14; 8:3; 9:5). It also explains the significance of important name changes in the patriarchal accounts (Gen. 17:5; 32:28). Here the proclamation of a new name for Zion indicates the new condition and character that God's salvation will provide for her. Some associate the new name with believers first being called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26); however most commentators see no such relationship.[227] V. 4 may be what is meant in v. 2.

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[227] In his commentary on Acts, J.W. McGarvey, one of the greatest scholars of the church, did not mention Isaiah or ch. 62:2. The closest he came to talking about the "new name" in his comments on Acts 11:26 is: "There has been much dispute as to whether this **new name** was given by Barnabas and Saul under divine authority, or by the Gentiles of Antioch, or by the disciples themselves. It would serve no practical purpose to decide between the latter two suppositions, for, with whichever party it originated, it was subsequently accepted by the disciples in general.

Before the announcement of the new names, however, another image is introduced to convey the character and condition of Israel. In 28:1-4 Ephraim was said to be a "a "proud crown whose beauty was fading like a party goers wreath of flowers."[228] Only the Lord can be Israel's "crown of glory" (28:5). Here Jehovah says that Zion will be a "crown of beauty" and a "royal diadem" in his hand. Why in his hand? Commentators have suggested several reasons why a crown would be in God's hand instead of on his head, some of them quite silly. If there is significance it is possibly the fact that being in Jehovah's hand speaks of the protection of God for his people (3).

Now we come to names specifically identified as new – **Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah**. The reason for the new names is that **Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married**. Note the distinction drawn between Zion and the land. Desolation and devastation had been the result of the sins committed in the land; a divine judgment had been brought upon it. But Zion is now called Hephzi-bah ("My delight is in her") and the land is called Beulah ("Married"). There will be a close and permanent relationship of possession between Zion and the land, for "he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain" (57:13) (4).

As a young man marries a virgin and dedicates himself to protecting and caring for her honor, so the sons of Zion dedicate themselves to the honor of Jehovah's land and people—his kingdom. Their relationship

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As to the supposition that the name was given by direct revelation through Barnabas and Saul, a thorough discussion of its merits would require more verbal criticism than is suited to the design of this work, and, at the same time, be less decisive in reference to the authority of the name in question, than the course of investigation which we prefer to institute. We retain, therefore, the common version of the passage, which is sustained by the great mass of critics of all ages and all parties, while we seek a more certain basis on which to rest the divine authority of the **new name** than verbal criticism can establish."

[228] This is a paraphrase. The text reads: "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" (ASV)

we be pure and chaste. **As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee**.

Vv. 6-9 – Jehovah's protection and provision for Zion

To what is Jehovah making reference when he declares, **I have set watchmen upon they walls, O Jerusalem**. It cannot refer to fallen Jerusalem when the people are captives in Babylon, nor can it refer to the return from exile. It was a hundred years before Nehemiah completed rebuilding the walls. Jehovah has been speaking of spiritual Zion, the walls of which will be called "Salvation" and her gates "Praise" (60:18). There is no reason to suppose that here he has switched to physical Jerusalem. Who, then, are the watchmen? Some say they are the prophets; some say they are the priests and prophets; some say they are angels. Haley suggests that there is a choice that relates more to spiritual Zion? "11And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors[229] and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Their assigned task is the perfecting of the saints. In that task **they shall never hold their peace day nor night; [they] are Jehovah's remembrancers [and are to] take … no rest**." While this is appealing, the assigned task seems more related to the coming of spiritual Zion than to spiritual Zion's care after its coming. If that is the case, who then are the watchmen? Some history may help reach a conclusion. First, "watchmen" is used one other time in 21:11 where they are asked what they see coming in the distance. A synonym occurs in 52:8 where the "watchmen" are fulfilling a similar role as they report the return of the victorious God to his city. A similar task may be implied here in that the watchmen are in position to report the arrival of God to complete his glorious plans for the city (cf. v. 10). But if that is their function it is strange that no mention is made of it. What is stated is that their commission is to remind God of his promise until it is accomplished (7).

[229] Of the elders, "them that have the rule over [us]," it is specifically said that "they watch in behalf of [our] souls" (Heb. 13:17).

In Ezekiel it is plain that the function of the watchman is to make people aware of coming danger so that they can avert the disaster, if they will (3:17-19; 33:7-9). The context there makes clear that those "watchmen" are the prophets, as some believe they are here. But the text here has no hint of the task of warning. Moreover, the text related to the New Zion makes clear that there will be no enemies for the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem to be warned of. Furthermore, it is not clear that a major part of the prophetic calling was the kind of intercession that is highlighted here.

A third possibility, and the one that has perhaps the fewest difficulties is that these are angelic beings (cf. *e.g.*, Dan. 4:13) who have been appointed by Jehovah as functionaries in the heavenly court, specifically **those that remind**. As 2 Sam. 18:6, 1 Kings 4:3, and Isa. 36:3 show, the Israelite kings had officials who title was "The One Who Reminds."[230] This person's task was probably to be certain that the king remembered what he had committed himself to do. Here then God, the heavenly king, is reassuring his people with imagery familiar to them that he will not forget what he has promised to do. He has gone so far as to appoint "watchers" whose sole task is not to allow him to forget how precious Jerusalem (*walls* is a synecdoche) is to him and what he has promised to do for it (Zech. 1:12; also Isa 43:26).

But why would God need to be reminded of his promises? That question arises from reading the imagery too literally. Whoever the "watchmen" are, the important thing is that God is asserting that he will never forget what he has promised, no matter how dark the days may become between the hour the prophet speaks it and the day of its fulfillment. To make that point again (cf. 49:15-16) he uses the imagery of the royal court. He will not forget, but just to be sure he will not, he has appointed "Reminders" whose sole duty it is to say, "Sir, don't forget what thou have said about Jerusalem." Will he forget" "No," a thousand times "no"! Not only will he not allow himself to rest (v. 1),

[230] Heb. *Mazkîr*, a Hiphil participle from *zkr*, "to remember," is usually translated as "secretary" or "recorder."

neither will he allow those who remind him to give him rest until the day that his vision for redeemed humanity is fully accomplished (8).

How certain is it that Jehovah will keep his promise. Just as God swore that he would not be wroth with Zion, that his loving-kindness would not depart from her, and that the covenant of peace would not be made void (54:9-10). Now he adds to that oath. By his uplifted hand and by the mighty arm of his strength, he swears to more will he give to Zion's enemies the grain and wine for which they had labored. Of course, this signifies spiritual food since literal grain and wine can neither sustain the immaterial part of man nor support an immaterial city. Zion's food is spiritual food: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27) (9).

Vv. 10-12 – Salvation of the Daughter of Zion

The majority of commentators think that the command to go through the gates relates to the return from the Babylonian exile. However, this does not seem to fit well with the remainder of the chapter. Zion's glory has been established and Jehovah's care guaranteed by an oath. It seems here that Jehovah is enjoining Zion to prepare for the nations to come in. Those within are to go forth and **prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones**, and then **lift up an ensign for** ("over," margin) **the peoples**. The ensign or standard could be a rallying point for an army in the field or for a scattered people. Earlier Isaiah said that the Root of Jesse would stand for an ensign of the peoples and that unto him would the nations seek (11:10). Jehovah promised that he would lift up his hand to the nations and "set up [his] ensign to the peoples" (49:22), whereupon they would bring Zion's sons and daughters to her. Thus, the language seems to teach that Zion's citizens go forth removing obstacles, making clear the way, and lifting high the banner so that those of the nations (Gentiles) can find their way to Zion and pass through the gates into the city (10).

When the Servant comes, he will come not only to the Jews, but will also be "for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto

the end of the earth" (49:6). This proclamation is made to his people who are scattered to the ends of the earth: **Say ye to the daughter of Zion** (the citizens), **Behold, thy salvation cometh**. The prophet is looking to that time when the glory of Zion will be complete through the Savior; then Jehovah's reward to the people will be a dwelling place in his presence, the wages for their patient waiting and labor (cf. 40:10) (11).

Those to whom salvation comes will be called **The holy people, The redeemed of Jehovah**. They will be recognized a people separate from all others because their redemption is of Jehovah, not man. The complaint that Jehovah has forsaken Zion (49:14, that she has been cast off as his wife (54:6), forsaken and hated (60:15) will no more be heard. Rather, **thou shalt be called Sought our**, for the Lord will have sought and called her out of the world, and **A city not forsaken** (cf. v. 4), constantly under his divine care and protection. While Isaiah does not include this warning, we can surely conclude from what he does say that should the citizens of Zion lose sight of this sacred relationship, become a religious "social club" concerned primarily with political affairs and business enterprises, they will cease to be **The holy people**, separate and different from the world. They will become just another religious body.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Vengeance, Mercy, and a Prayer

In their day, Israel and Edom stood for opposite positions religiously. Israel was the symbol of Jehovah worship, representing the one true God. Edom, its brother nation, stood as a symbol of opposition to Jehovah and the true religion. Because it opposed and hated Israel, it also opposed and hated Israel's God. Because of this hatred for Israel and its God, Edom must be judged and brought to an end (see ch. 34; Obad.; Mal. 1:2-5). No specific time is given for this judgment; the vision simply reveals what Jehovah will ultimately do to the nation.

Vv. 1-6 – Jehovah's Vengeance on His Enemies

Isaiah begins by asking who it is that comes from Edom wearing **dyed** (red) **garments from Bozrah**.[231] He is a dignified person, **glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength**. The answer comes: **I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save**. It is Jehovah. He speaks in righteousness; in the zeal of his holiness threatening judgment to the oppressors, and promising salvation to the oppressed; and what he threatens and promises, he carries out with mighty power. It is God from whose mouth of righteousness (Isa. 45:23) the consolation of redemption proceeds, and whose holy omnipotent arm (Isa. 52:10; 59:16) carries out the act of redemption (1).

Jehovah's answer produces another question: **Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat** (2)?

The second question leads to a second answer: **3I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with me: yea, I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. 4For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my wrath, it upheld me. 6And I trod down the peoples in mine anger, and made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.** His garments are red because he had in fact trod the winepress. He trod it alone because there was no man to help. He trod them in anger and wrath and their blood stained his garments. The day of vengeance was in his heart and the year of his redeemed had come.[232] He has cut down Edom and other nations as well as one cuts grapes from the vine and tossed them into the winepress where judgment was administered. No one helped; no help was needed. He

[231] Bozrah is considered by some to have been Edom's capital, at least at some point in time. Others are not so certain.

[232] Some take "day" and "year" to signify the length (figurative or literal) of the periods of vengeance and redemption; however, that is most likely reading too much into that which is no more than using two different words for sake of variety.

used his own strong arm to pour out their lifeblood upon the earth (3-6).

Vv. 7-9 – Jehovah's Enduring Love for His People

Jehovah has assured the people of salvation through the Servant (52:13-53:12; he has urged Zion to prepare for a great influx of new citizens (54:1-3); the glory of Zion has been foretold (chs. 60-62); and the judgment of the heathen has been guaranteed (63:1-6). It is now time to count blessings and offer praise to Jehovah (vv. 7-9), to remember Jehovah's mercies of old (vv. 10-14) and to pray (63:15-64:12).

While Isaiah uses the personal pronoun "I," he is probably acting as spokesperson for the faithful remnant of his day. He begins by "mentioning" or "recounting"[233] Jehovah's loving-kindness. Given the definition of the Hebrew word translated "mention" in the ASV, it is likely that Isaiah was doing more than just reciting history. He is "causing to remember" Jehovah's acts of tenderness that emanated from his everlasting love in order to set the stage for calling upon his hearers to praise Jehovah according to all the many good things he has done for the house of Israel (7).

Given the foundation that Isaiah has laid in v. 7, *i.e.*, a heavily repetitive assertion of the goodness of God, what follows is not to be read as a memory of Israel's rebellion, or of God's punishment, but of the way God has demonstrated the fundamental beneficence of his character in all his treatment of Israel. In many ways this is the dominant feature of the entire Old Testament. When Gentile writers (from Marcion[234]

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[233] **Hiph. 1.** *cause to* remember, *remind*, c. acc. pers.

2. *cause to be remembered, keep in remembrance,* c. acc. rei, a person's name; of ’-, causing his name to be remembered, by some token.

3. *mention,*

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

[234] Marcion was a prominent heretic of the second century. His birth date is unknown. He died around 160 AD. He was a native of Sinope in Pontus, where his

onward) look at the Old Testament and see a god of wrath, the Old Testament writers say to us in astonishment, "Oh no, it's not surprising that God would have gotten angry with us. What is surprising is that he ever cared about us at all, and that he then continued to love us and care for us when we senselessly rejected him. What has the Hebrew experience taught them about God, first and last? He is a God of unfailing kindness, grace, mercy, and love. Circumstances may change, our rebellions may even make him our enemy. But the kindness of God never changes; and when we recount all that God has done in our experience, it will end up in praise for who he is (see Rom. 5:8).

Those great deeds were highlighted by the deliverance from Egypt when he claimed them as his people and walked among them as their God (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:13). Given his loving-kindness, great goodness, and abundant mercies shown to his people, he said, **Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me**. God's action followed: **And so he became their Savior** (8).

As their Savior, **in all their affliction he was afflicted**. "And his [Jehovah's] soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Judges 10:16). Throughout Israel's history the Lord was concerned with and shared the people's suffering, just as the Savior is "touched with the feeling of

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father was said to have been bishop and to have excommunicated his son from the church for immorality. In subsequent years he was reportedly a wealthy shipowner. Around 140 he arrived in Rome, where he became a disciple of the heretic Cerdo. In the next few years he worked out a theological system of his own and soon outshone his teacher. From Rome he organized the propagation of his views. He was successful in gaining a large following throughout the empire. This group became a major threat to the Christian faith and provoked a wide response among Christian scholars who refuted the wrong notions of Marcionism. At the heart of Marcion's theology is a dualistic notion of God. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New are not the same. The God of the Old Testament is the cause of the world and of evil. He is legal–minded, violent, vindictive. The religion of this God is oriented around laws and demands. The God of Jesus Christ, however, is the opposite. He is the forgiving and saving God. He is "unknown" except that he is revealed in Jesus. And in Jesus he is revealed as pure love and mercy. The religion of this God is oriented around love. It is the purpose of Jesus and his love to overthrow the God of the Old Testament and the religion of law.

our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). **And the angel of his presence**[235] **saved them**. The word translated "angel" may also be rendered "messenger" or "representative"; the word translated "presence" literally means "face." Jehovah promises Moses, "My presence [face] shall go with thee" (Exod. 33:14). Thus, the "angel" is the representative of Jehovah's face or presence that went with Israel. Inasmuch Christ accompanied Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:4), and is "the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Col. 1:15) and "the effulgence[236] of his glory" (Heb. 1:3), this representative of Jehovah's presence probably is the Word of God that became flesh (John 1:14), the preincarnate Messiah. Moved by love and pity, Jehovah redeemed them and bore them and carried them all the days of old. Isaiah and the remnant praise Jehovah and give him glory for Israel's redemption and providential care through history (v. 9).

Vv. 10-14 – The People's Response: Rebellion

Jehovah had been gracious to Israel and had urged them to hear the voice of the Messenger whom he would send. Additionally he had warned them of punishment if they rebelled against him (Ex. 23:21). In spite of promise and warning, they did not heed and rebelled against Jehovah from the beginning, grieving his holy Spirit and bringing him sorrow and pain (cf. Psa. 78:40; 106:43). Therefore, instead of being to them what he wished to be, Jehovah became their enemy and gave them up just as he did the antediluvian world (Gen. 6:6-7).

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[235] "The angel of his presence" is a phrase that occurs only here in scripture.

[236] **ἀπαύγασμα, τος** *n:* shining, either in the sense of radiance from a source or the reflection of a source of light — 'radiance, reflection.' ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης 'who is the reflection of (God's) glory' or 'who is the radiance of (God's) glory' He 1:3.

It is impossible to determine whether ἀπαύγασμα should be interpreted in an active sense and therefore 'radiance,' or in a passive sense and therefore as 'reflection.' If the meaning is 'radiance,' then one may translate this phrase in He 1:3 as 'he shines with God's glory' or even 'God's glory shines through him.' If one understands the meaning of ἀπαύγασμα as being 'reflection,' then one may often say 'God's glory shines back from him.'

There is an exegetical point here concerning the identity of the **holy Spirit**. Does it refer to Jehovah himself, to his temper or disposition, or to the Holy Spirit as a person? The *angel of Jehovah* is a personal being distinguished from Jehovah (v. 9). Likewise, the *holy Spirit* is here distinguished from Jehovah. He can experience grief (cf. Eph. 4:30), a characteristic peculiar to a person. This leads to the conclusion that Isaiah is speaking of the *Holy Spirit* as a person in this passage. If so, in these verses we have Jehovah (the Father), the angel of Jehovah (the Son), and the Holy Spirit. The rebellion of the people is rebellion against the total Godhead (10).

In v. 11 another exegetical issue is raised. The ASV text reads: "**Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people**." The ASV margin reads: "**Then his people remembered the ancient days of Moses**." Which shall we follow? Five questions follow:

1) **Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock?** This question seems to confirm the margin's reading. Is the question being asked by the faithful few or by the people as a whole? It seems to be more in keeping with the context to view the nation as the questioner, although some scholars think that the prophet is speaking for the faithful few. **Out of the sea** refers to crossing of the Read Sea (cf. Psa. 106:9). **The shepherds of his flock** are Moses and Aaron. If the marginal reading, "shepherd," that is supported by some ancient manuscripts is adopted, it is a reference to Moses only. Since only Moses is referenced in the context, the singular is preferable.

2) Where is he that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them? This is a probable reference to Jehovah's giving his Spirit to the seventy elders in the wilderness (cf. Num. 11:17, 25, 29; Hag. 2:5). The Spirit here, as in v. 10**, is the third person of the Trinity.**

3) Where is he . . . that caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses? This question points back to Jehovah's leading and strengthening Moses from the time of deliverance out of Egypt to arrival at the border of Canaan. **His glorious arm** is the mighty power

God exhibited in the deliverance from Egypt and the care of his people in the wilderness as he stood by Moses throughout.

4) Where is he . . . that divided the waters before them to make himself an everlasting name? This question pertains to the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. Where is he who exercised that great power when he led Israel out of Egypt, thus making for himself **an everlasting name** both among the nations then and among all peoples since?

5) Where is he . . . that led them through the depths, as a horse in the wilderness, so that they stumbled not? But for having been led by his glorious power through the depths of the waters they would have drowned like the Egyptians. In crossing the sea Israel was as surefooted as a horse traveling on a smooth desert waste where it does not stumble – the crossing was without mishap to the people and their stock.

A final illustration completes the picture. As cattle that have been grazing on the rugged slopes of a mountain go down into the valley for water and rest, so **the Spirit of Jehovah caused them to rest** in Canaan at their journey's end. By his great strength and mighty power Jehovah led his people through all these trials, making his name more glorious.

These questions must have left Israel wondering. Why did God so gloriously deliver then and not now?

Vv. 15-19; 64 – An Impassioned Prayer for Mercy and Help

The people have looked back at the love, mercy and power of Jehovah in the deliverance from Egypt. They have looked at their own condition. That comparison leads them to cry unto God in prayer for help. They call upon Jehovah to **Look down from heaven and behold from the habitation of [his] holiness and ... glory** their present condition where his **zeal** and **mighty** acts seem to be absent. There is no zeal against our enemies or the accompanying exercise of mighty power against them (cf. 26:11; 42:13; 59:17). Why are **the yearning of [his]**

heart and **[his] compassions** … **restrained toward me?** Though they did not recognize it then and though we do not recognize it now, there is always a purpose in chastening (15).

Israel further pleads their cause. After all, God is their Father, the one who brought their nation into existence. That Abraham and Israel do not know them does not mean that they now reject the people, or claim no relation to them. It means that descent from the patriarchs cannot help them. Although Abraham and Jacob were their physical progenitors, Jehovah is their spiritual Father and true Redeemer. It is to Jehovah that they must appeal (16).

A first reading of this verse seems to suggest that God is somehow responsible for their condition, a thought that has already been denied (59:1-2). Man alone is responsible for his sins. The thought actually hearkens back to 6:10, the charge given to Isaiah at his call. If the people hearken to Jehovah, it will be well, but if they do not, they will become completely hardened. They did not hearken; therefore, that which should have turned them to Jehovah hardened them. The plea is for God to return for the sake of Israel, whom he has chosen to be his servants, lest the tribes become extinct in the land (17).

A look at the many renderings and interpretations that are given to vv. 18-19 indicates that at least one ting is clear – they are difficult verses. The original Hebrew contains no object for the verb **possessed**. What is it that the people possessed? Three possibilities are the land, the mountain, or the sanctuary. Since each is a possibility, certainty is impossible and dogmatism is inappropriate. All things considered, **land** seems to be the best choice. Some object that it cannot be the land because Israel possessed the promised land for a long time. Delitzsch argues that it can be considered a short time because the passing of time compresses past periods. While that may be correct, Haley has a better explanation. He observes that early in Israel's history Jehovah had said that when they "have been long in the land" and have fully corrupted themselves with idolatry, "ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land" that you go over the Jordan to possess (Deut. 4:25-26). The land was greatly corrupted by Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-18). Thereafter

there was only one good king (Josiah), who attempted to reform Israel, but failed. Josiah was followed by four evil kings, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian exile. These facts, Haley suggests, could be the fulfillment of Isaiah's words that **thy people possessed it but a little while**, or for a short time. Oswalt says that there is a combination of the three possibilities. He observes that it is unclear whether the people possessed something (land, sanctuary, mountain) for a short time but lost it to adversaries who then trampled the sanctuary; or whether the enemies of the people dispossessed the people, and in so doing trampled the sanctuary. He concludes that the latter seems more likely because it requires the least change[237] in the Masoretic text. Oswalt concludes that the sense of the phrase is that during the brief time that the holy people were dispossessed, their adversaries trampled God's sanctuary (the temple was in a state of ruin). The significance of the phrase in the context is that it is "almost ironic" because chapter 62 closed on a high note calling the people "the Holy People" and Zion "Sought Out." He views Isaiah asking, "Now what about your holy people?" The reality, he argues, is that the people or not so much "redeemed" as they are "dispossessed," and if they are restored to the land at this point they cannot say that they possess the land because they are vassals of Persia. Young departs from his propensity to discuss the smallest point at great length and, after discussing a related problem, says simply, "On the other hand, it is quite natural to take *people* as subject; and if this is done[238] some object such as *the land* (Delitzsch) should be understood" (18).

God's people once more are expressing the thought that God has forgotten them and that, even thought they had been called by Jehovah's name, they were no better off then those over whom he had never ruled. This demonstrates not only an ignoring of God's promises that he had not and would not forget them, it also ignores that fact that God

[237] Theologians who need to justify their long and expensive education would use the term "emandation" instead of "change."
[238] The related problem was a discussion of whether *enemies* or *people* should be the subject of the verb *possessed*. Thus, he saw a problem with the subject of the verb as well as with its object.

is creator of all and governs all, including the nations that have never been blessed by wearing his name and being his special people.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

A FERVENT PRAYER

Vv. 1-7 – Prayer for Jehovah's Presence and Action

The prayer that began at 63:15 continues through this chapter. 63:15 called upon God to look down from heaven and behold. That call is here repeated. The prayer is for God to **rend the heavens** behind which he has hidden himself[239] and to **come down**. The plea seems to ask that he come down as he did at Mt. Sinai when the earth quaked at his presence (Exod. 19:11, 18-20).[240] The mountains represent that which is most firm and solid and strong upon the face of the earth. If even they **tremble** and **quake** at God's presence, how great his power must be and who can abide him? They had apparently forgotten the fear that terrorized them on that occasion (Exod. 20:18-21; Deut. 5:25-27). More importantly, they had refused to listen to him at Sinai. Would they listen to him now (1-3)?

In chapter 41:21-24 Jehovah challenged the idol-gods to speak or act – to do something – but they only brought shame to their devotees by their inability (44:9). Isaiah now says **For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee**.[241] From the beginning of the world no one had seen an idol-god

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[239] God "dwells in the thick darkness" (2 Chron. 6:1). "Thick clouds are a covering to him" as he "walketh in the circuit of heaven" (Job 22:14).

[240] When Gode appeared to David, "the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken" (Ps. 18:7). When he was seen of Elijah, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; and after the wind was an earthquake" (1 Kings 19:11). Micah saw the Lord "coming forth out of his place," and "the mountains were molten under him, and the valleys cleft" (Micah 1:3, 4).

[241] Paul uses this language in 1 Cor. 2:9. Of Paul's use Young writes: "Paul is not speaking to give an exact quotation of this verse, but rather is using the language

do a single act or heard and idol-god speak a single word. Jehovah God was the only God who performed acts for **him that waiteth for him** (40:31). Before all of God's words and works, whether in delivering his people of old, in rendering judgments against the wicked, or in providing the gospel of redemption, man stands in awe of his unique being and power; there is none comparable to him (4).

V. 5 is a difficult verse. One commentator said of this verse[242] [paraphrasing] that there was no verse in Isaiah or in the Old Testament on which modern commentators had spent more ink and shed less light. For a lengthy discussion of the varying views consult Albert Barnes' commentary on Isaiah. While the text is obscure, the thought seems to be that Jehovah meets[243] and aids those who rejoice in him and work righteousness. In spite of God's warning and wrath, **we sinned**. Moreover, they continued in their sin **of a long time**. They ask, in that condition **shall we be saved** (5)?

What is the effect of their sin? They have become unclean both ceremonially (legally) and morally and their righteousness is as a polluted garment.[244] The condition of the people is hopeless. Their problem is their persistent sinning and their inability to do anything about it. Isaiah knew firsthand that sin brought defilement (6:5) in the presence of the absolutely Clean One. It is no accident that the section of Leviticus that follows the "Manual of Sacrifice" in chs. 1-10 is a section on the clean and unclean (chs. 11-15), which is followed in turn by the Day of Atonement (Ch. 16). Those were all object lessons designed to convey the fundamental truth that sin is not a matter of behavioral dysfunction, but an offense against the nature of creation that contaminates an destroys the human spirit just as surely as disease does the physical

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and varying it as he will to express his own thought concerning the newness and uniqueness of the Gospel."

[242] He did not say whether he included himself among the group he described.

[243] The Hebrew word translated *Thou meetest* is translated "intercession" in 53:12 and "intercessor" in 59:16. Thus Jehovah speaks or intercedes for those who work righteousness, those who remember, pay mental attention to, his ways (cf. Prov. 3:5-8), and act in harmony with them.

[244] Literally, a "menstrual cloth."

body. Thus, the "holy people" are not holy at all; they are as unclean as lepers (Lev. 13:44-46; see also Hag. 2:13-14). That which they call righteous acts are corrupt; they are not the sign of new life coming, but of the lack of conception, because all they do is self-serving and self-enhancing (cf. 57:12; 58:2). Including himself ("we" and "our"), Isaiah declares that the end result of their conduct is death and decay. He compares them to a dead leaf that they wind blows away. Our sins come to define us and determine the directions that our lives take. God is the giver of life, and those whose sins cut them off from him as the source will find themselves blown away. The same point is made in Psa. 1:4, using the figure of chaff. (6).

The evidence of the hopeless condition of the nation in view of its sins is that no one is even concerned enough about the situation to cry out to God for help. From 63:12 to now this is the sixth reference to the name of God. The other five have all concerned how the character of God is revealed and perceived. But now Isaiah has abandoned that concern. Far from the people's allowing God to demonstrate the glory of his name through them to the world, none among them is even aware enough of his glorious character to call on such a God to do something about their condition. They are so sunk in spiritual lethargy that they cannot even rouse themselves to lay hold of God.[245] No one seemed to recognize the desperation of the situation, no one cared enough about it, no one knew the name of God well enough to believe that even in an hour like this he would respond with grace and mercy. There was no intercessor; there was none to intervene (cf. 59:16; 63:5) (7).

Vv. 8-12 – A Renewed Cry for Mercy

Though Jehovah is the Creator of all mankind, he is the Father only of his spiritual children. His children need to learn that a potter can only mold a vessel as the clay yields to his hand. If he is unable to make a

[245] This interesting phrase is reminiscent of Jacob as he wrestled with the "man" at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32). He seized hold of God, whom "the man" represents, and would not let him go because he recognized how desperate his situation was. If God did not help him all was lost. There was no other helper.

vessel unto honor, then he makes on unto dishonor (Jer. 18:1-4). He seeks to make the best, but he may have to settle for something inferior. The people have not yielded themselves; therefore he has made of them a vessel of dishonor (8).

Jehovah has promised that, for his own sake, he will blot out their transgressions (43:25). Although that promise in not explicitly mentioned here, It may be in the people's mind as they cry out to God. They do not ask that there be no judgment, but that he not be angry with them forever. Instead of invoking God's nature as the basis of their cry, they invoke their standing as God's people. Habakkuk reports the cry, "In wrath remember mercy (Hab. 3:2). In Jehovah's reply (ch. 65), he separates the faithful from the unfaithful, declaring the destiny of each (9).

The condition of Judah is dire – its cities and Zion have become a wilderness and Jerusalem a desolation (10).

In the center of that desolation and destruction is the temple of God where their fathers praised Jehovah now burned with fire. Their "pleasant places" may be either their homes, gardens, and other things they esteemed and that therefore brought them delight, or the gardens and courtyards of the temple and the holy things associated with worship that brought them holy delight. Delitzsch suggests that, given the context, the latter is more likely (11).

The prayer closes with two questions to God. Given the conditions they describe, can God fail to act? Will he continue the affliction indefinitely (12)? Though the questions are not answered here, a negative answer seems to be implied in ch. 65.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Jehovah's Response to the Prayer

Vv. 1-7 – Destruction of the Apostates: A Just Recompense

Because of their rebellion and idolatry, Jehovah cannot do that for which they plead. He will cast off the fleshly nation, but will redeem or save a remnant. The present order will pass away; he will create a new order.

Paul's use of this passage dictates that which the passage has in view. Paul applies v. 1 to the Gentiles and v. 2 to Israel (Rom. 10:20-21[246]). Israel has prayed to God for deliverance on the basis that they are his people. Jehovah's response is that he is rejecting them and that he will be **found of a people who have not sought him** and **who were not called by his name**. The Gentiles have not sought God, nor have they been called by his name. However, he will summon the people of a nation not hitherto included (55:5), inviting them through the gospel as Isaiah has earlier foretold (49:6) (1).

God now addresses Israel. To "spread out the hands" is a gesture of appeal imploring the people to hear him. He had done this **all the day**, but they have continued to be **a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good** (and thus is evil)**, after their own thoughts** (devices and plans). In short, they did that which they wished to do (cf. 63:10) (2).

God now proceeds to cite the evidence to support his charges. They **provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; [4]that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; [5]that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day**. While there is some disagreement concerning the precise rebellious acts to which reference is made, it is clear that the charge is that the people carry on their rebellious and blasphemous acts by throwing them in the very face of God, demonstrating no fear of consequences and taunting Jehovah to do anything about it (3-5).

[246] Paul probably quoted from the Septuagint version and deleted part of the passage; however, his application of it is the surest commentary we have.

God responds that he will not keep silent, *i.e.*, he will not overlook such conduct. Indeed, it is written before him. Just as he keeps records of the lives of his people (4:3), recording even the tears of his saints (Psa. 56:8), he keeps an account of the wicked and he will **recompense** their evil deeds **into their bosom**. Their sin that must be recompensed in full had continued from their fathers (Jer. 3:25; 7:25-26; 9:14). The mountains and hills were favorites places for erecting altars to offer sacrifices to idols, sacrifices that were often accompanies by immoral practices. Such conduct blasphemed God by bringing reproach upon his holy name. Because of that conduct God cannot grant the result for which they pray, but will **first measure their work into their bosom** (6-7).

Vv. 8-12 – Salvation of a Remnant – Destruction of the Faithless

Though Israel will be destroyed, Jehovah will spare a remnant. No one destroys a good cluster of grapes just because it is surrounded by sour or worthless ones. It is spared because **a blessing is in it**. God will treat in the same manner those servants who choose to serve him. God has promised a blessing to all nations through the seed of Abraham and Jacob. To that end Jehovah will bring a seed out of Jacob and out of Judah shall come an inheritor, Jehovah's chosen, who will inherit his mountains (his land) where Jehovah's servants will dwell. The context makes clear that this is not the return from Babylonian exile, but to those who take refuge in God (57:13). Their blessings for Jehovah's servants will be spiritual prosperity, figuratively represented by the flocks of Sharon[247] and the herds of the Valley of Achor[248] (8-10).

[247] Sharon was a plain, a level tract extending from the Mediterranean to the hill country to the west of Jerusalem, about 30 miles long and from 8 to 15 miles broad, celebrated for its beauty and fertility (1 Chr. 27:29; Isa. 33:9; 35:2; 65:10). The "rose of Sharon" is celebrated.

[248] The Valley of Achor, (ay'kohr; Heb., 'trouble'), part of the north border of Judah (Josh. 15:7) and the location of the execution of Achan (Josh. 7:24-26) after his profiteering in a holy war. In Hos. 2:15 and Isa. 65:10 its reputation for that former 'trouble' is reversed and the prophets use it as a symbol of better times to come. It is probably modern el-Buqei'ah between Jericho and the north end of the Dead Sea.

Jehovah now turns himself to those who forsake him, forget his holy mountain, prepare a table for Fortune, and fill up mingled wine unto Destiny. [249] For our purposes we need only mention that Fortune and Destiny were two heathen deities before whom Israel had spread tables (cf. Psa. 23:5; 69:22; 78:18-19) of food and offered drink oblations. With a play on the word Destiny, Jehovah says, "**I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter**." The destiny and fate of the people did not rest in the hand of idols, but in the determined counsel and overruling providence of God. The reason for their destruction is two fold: **when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake ye did not hear**. Rather they chose to **do that which was evil in my eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.** They must now suffer the consequences 11-12).

Vv. 13-16 – Blessings and Judgment

Therefore introduces conclusions based on the foregoing promises of blessings and threats of punishment. The conclusions are those of and are spoken by **the Lord Jehovah**. Four contrasts are set forth between Jehovah's servants and those who do evil in which he does not delight:

SERVANTS	DOERS OF EVIL
Shall eat	Shall be hungry
Shall drink	Shall be thirsty
Shall rejoice	Shall be put to shame
Shall sing for joy of heart	Shall cry for sorrow of heart and wail for vexation of spirit
Jehovah will call by another name	Shall leave your name for a curse

[249] The translations *Fortune* ("Gad," Hebrew) and *Destiny* ("Meni," Hebrew) are preferable to the KJV's renderings. These are evidently early Canaanitish deities. When Israel came into the land at least two towns bore the name *Gad*, Baal-Gad (Josh. 11:17) and Migdal-gad (Josh. 15:37). Delitzsch devotes four pages to a learned discussion of these two names.

	unto my chosen; and the Lord Jehovah shall slay thee

"Bless" means "to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity etc."[250] One can be blessed only in the Lord (Eph. 1:3); apart from him there are no blessings. They can't be found in Fortune and Destiny. The commitments of the God of Truth hold fast (2 Cor. 1:20).[251] All oaths will be sworn in the name of the God of truth and not of an idol deity. Such oaths are as binding as is the character of God in whose name they are taken. **The former troubles are forgotten**; the afflictions brought on by unfaithfulness are completely removed, blotted out. **They are hidden from [Jehovah's] eyes**, not to be brought against his people again. The old order with its heavens "shall vanish away like smoke," and its "earth shall wax old like a garment" to be laid aside (51:6). At that time Jehovah will plant new spiritual heavens and lay the foundation of a new earth (13-16).

Vv. 17-25 – The New Heavens and the New Earth

The coming of the Messiah will usher in a new spiritual and moral order or arrangement. Paul calls this new order "a dispensation [arrangement] of the fullness of the times," when all things will be summed up (brought together under one head) in Christ (Eph. 1:10). Isaiah's new heavens and new earth are the new arrangement to which Paul refers, and before which all old dispensations must pass away. **For, behold** – attention is focused on Jehovah and what he is about to do – **I create**. The word *create* is the same word used by Moses to describe the original creation (Gen. 1:1), emphasizes Jehovah's intention to bring something new into being. A completely new order shall be created by God, **and the former things shall no be remembered, nor come into mind**. This strong language emphasizes that the entire former system, which included a special physical nation and geographical area, animal sacrifices, and ceremonial rites, will be completely

[250] *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

[251] For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.

removed and abolished forever. As Paul describes it, "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17) (17).

The people are to **be glad and rejoice forever**, as long as the age shall last, **in that which I create**, the new heavens and the new earth – the new spiritual order. This new arrangement requires a new central city for the newly created people. Therefore, **behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy**. As Jehovah has shared the affliction of his people (63:9), so he now shares their joy. He rejoices in Jerusalem and in his people cf. 62:5), *Jerusalem* and *my people* being equivalent. With former troubles forgotten and with joy and rejoicing in the new creation, weeping and crying are past (18-19).

V. 20 makes the top ten list of difficult passages in Isaiah. There are numerous and various unsatisfactory explanations. Perhaps the best way to begin is to determine that which the context is seeking to accomplish. Isaiah's purpose here seems to be to describe the times of happiness and prosperity that would succeed the calamities under which the nation had been suffering. This he does by using a great number of images, all denoting substantially the same thing. In v. 17 the change is represented as great as if a new heaven and a new earth should be created. In verse 20 the image is that the inhabitants would reach a great age, and that the comparatively happy times of the patriarchs would be restored. In verse 21 the image is taken from the perfect security in their plans of labor, and the fact that they would enjoy the fruit of their labor. In verse 25 the image is that taken from the change in the nature of the animal creation. All of these are poetic images designed as illustrations of the general truth, and, like other poetic images, they are not to be taken literally.

There shall be no more hence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days. The LXX renders it, "Nor shall there be there any more an untimely birth, and an old man who has not filled up his time." The idea is not that there should be no infant deaths in those times. Such an idea would be so absurd that a prophet would not use it even under poetic license. The concept is that there will not be an infant who will not fill up his days or will be short-lived. All shall

live long and be blessed with health. There shall be a longevity that will not be broken and feeble, but will be blessed with health and vigor. There is no reason to believe that such language will be literally fulfilled. If it is to be literally fulfilled we must also suppose that the nature of the lion will be changed so that it eats straw with the ox, and that the nature of the wolf and the lamb will be changed so greatly that they will lie down together. The promise of a long life is regarded in the Bible as a blessing, and is an image, everywhere, of prosperity and happiness. But what of the "sinner"? Some suggest that Isaiah is "hedging his bet" so to speak, and saying that even if a sinner lived to 100 years of age he would still be accursed. His length of years would not be a sign of God's blessing. I am inclined to agree with those (Moffatt among them) who, based on the word for "sin" being related to "missing the mark," suggest that it should be so understood here, thus translating, "Anyone dying under (falling short of) a hundred years must be accursed by God." In any event that last part of the verse states a reason for the first part. **FOR the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed**. One dying at a hundred years shall be considered a child. Moffatt's translation seems to fit that reason.

It is difficult to disallow Hailey's construction. He correctly argues that Jehovah's eternal nature does not reckon with time – a thousand years or as a day and a day is as a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8). Thus, God measures his activities by the accomplishment of the several aspects of his purpose, not by years. From this he concludes that in the new order each citizen, whether for a brief moment as was the case of Stephen (Acts 7), or for a lengthy period, as was the case of Paul or John, will fulfill his mission in God's purpose. He adds that it is not the length but the fullness of one's days that counts, and the sinner, regardless of the length of his days, is accursed. All that Hailey says is

true, but in this context it appears to be more of a forced explanation that an adequate exegesis (20)[252].

Security and permanence, together with God's providential care and supply for all needs, are indicated here.[253] The people of the new order will not be robbed of their heritage and the fruit of their labor (62:8-9). The days of Jehovah's people, his chosen, will be as the days of a tree, a symbol of longevity, permanence, beauty, and fruitfulness (cf. 61:3; Jer. 17:8). They shall long enjoy the fruitful works of their hands (21-22).

In past years the people labored for that which did not satisfy (FF:2) and wearied themselves in following their own way (57:10). Now it will be different. Their labor in the new order will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58), not will it bring **calamity**, the sudden terror of death and destruction as punishment from the Lord, as had the idolatry and faithlessness of the old nation. The reason is that **they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah** (cf. 53:10; 61:9). An additional part of God promise here is that their spiritual offspring will likewise share in the blessing (23).

Promising to answer prayer, Jehovah goes beyond what is pledged in 58:9 and Psalm 145: 18-19. Before his saints call on him, Jehovah will know their needs (Matt. 6:8), and will have made provision for them. This assurance does not mean that there will be no need to pray, but that "The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Psa. 34:15; cf. 1 Pet. 3:12). His chosen servants are never to be anxious, for the Lord is always at hand; so in everything they are to make their requests known unto him (Phil 4:4-7) (24).

This verse confirms that this passage related to the Messianic period. Isaiah condenses what he said in 11:6-9 – the wild and domesticated animals shall eat together – and adds the note that the serpent shall eat

[252] Recall the beginning of our discussion of v. 20. Hailey may include my conclusions among the "numerous and various unsatisfactory explanations" that he rejected and that necessitated him to seek and find his conclusion.
[253] The same concept is found in v. 10 though a different figure is used to express the same idea.

dust. **They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain** occurs both here and in 11:9. God's holy mountain is the mountain of his house into which all nations shall flow (2:2-4), the mountain to which foreigners shall be brought when they join themselves to Jehovah (56:6-7), and the mountain which is the inheritance of those who take refuge in him (57:13; 66:20). The phrase **and dust shall be the serpent's food** is related to Genesis 3:14 where the serpent was told "and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." To "eat" or "lick the dust" is metaphorical for an humbled or defeated condition (cf. 49:23; Mic. 7:17). In the great spiritual conflict that began in Eden between Satan and his angels, and Jehovah and his forces of right, the Serpent was defeated. This defeat of Satan by Christ (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8) guarantees the victory of the saints (Rom. 16:20). This is the holy mountain and heavenly Jerusalem to which we have come and in which we experience special blessings (Heb. 12:22; Eph. 1:3) (25).

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Jehovah's Judgments – Zion's Rejoicing

Vv. 1-6 – Jehovah's Greatness and the Abomination of Idolatry

In this concluding chapter Isaiah brings into focus Jehovah's future judgments and the enlargement, rejoicing, and glory of Zion. The Lord seems to be pointing to the final days of Judah and the coming glory of Zion in the new dispensation. He is speaking of things to come revealed to him by Jehovah through the Holy Spirit. He looks to the climax of judgment and the glorious hope about which he has been preaching throughout his long life of service to Jehovah and his people.

From the beginning of his prophetic work. Isaiah has spoken of the coming collapse and fall of the nation because of moral corruption within (ch.1; 5:5-7). But out of the ruin there will be established a new nation composed of many peoples and of a remnant that has been redeemed, cleansed, and purified (2:2-4; 4:2-6). The final chapter of the prophecy begins with the affirmation that Jehovah is speaking. In vision, Isaiah has seen the sanctuary trodden down (63:18) and the beau-

tiful house of the Lord laid waste. And now in view of the fact that the spiritual remnant and the redeemed from the nations are coming to Zion, there is need to build another temple. Jehovah says, **Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool** (cf. Psa. 11:4; 103:19), and asks, **What manner of house will ye build unto me? And what place shall be my rest?**[254] A physical temple was necessary under that dispensation, but even it could not contain Jehovah (1 Kings 8:27). Accordingly, the people were not to put their trust in the temple, but in Jehovah himself. Yet they seemed to trust in the temple because it represented his presence (Jer. 7:1-4) (1).

The materials that went into the building of the temple were made by Jehovah, but were perishable and will pass away. The material from which God will construct his new temple are men who are **poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word**. Such individuals will be the building material of Jehovah's new house (cf. Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5) (2).

V. 3 has two possible meanings. First, it can mean that one who burns incense or offers legal sacrifices in the wrong spirit is guilty of murder and of offering abominable sacrifices to idols. Second, it can mean that in the new temple and under the new order, the offering of sacrifices that were formerly acceptable will be idolatry. The end result is the same in either case – **they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations**. What they are doing is displeasing to God; any worship offered in the wrong spirit or unauthorized by God, both then and now, is unacceptable to him (3).

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[254] This is not, as some commentators suggest, a criticism of Haggai's zeal for rebuilding the temple upon the return from captivity, for phrases like "saith Jehovah" and "the word of Jehovah" occur about twenty-five times in his short book, affirming that the urgency was from the Lord himself. And Zechariah, Haggai's contemporary, offers corroboration: "Therefore thus saith Jehovah: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it" (Zech. 1:16). A physical temple was necessary under that dispensation, but even it culd not contain Jehovah

Jehovah will determine the consequence of such actions, bringing upon those who delight in their abominations the full recompense of their rejection of his will and way. If they choose their own ways and sacrifices Jehovah **will choose their delusions** (cf. 65:12; 2 Thess. 2:11-12) (4).

The Lord now addresses those who hear his word, tremble at it, and yield to its instruction. He clearly distinguishes this group from **your brethren that hate you**. The phrase "your brethren" indicates that the two groups being distinguished are Jews. Those who tremble at God's word are hated because of their righteousness and fear of Jehovah. They are cast out **for my names sake**, that is, excluded as if unclean. In an ironical or sarcastic sprit, those who hate the righteous say, **Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy**. But those who fear God will not be humiliated; **it is they** (those who hate the righteous) **that shall be put to shame** (5).

The entire passage (vv. 1-6) seems to point to the close of the old Jewish order when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (AD 70). There is heard **a voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple**. The basic meaning of the word translated "tumult" is an uproar of a great crowd of people, or the crashing din of war (cf. 13:4). The **voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense** is the havoc inflicted in response to his command bringing about the destruction of the city and temple in retribution for the mockers' insults. This points to the destruction of Jerusalem by either the Babylonians or the Romans, probably the latter. But even if the Babylonian assault is in view, it foreshadows what will happen when the Jews reject the Servant, bringing swift and sure recompense upon themselves. Both Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed at the voice (command) of Jehovah (6).

Vv. 7-14 – Blessings in the New Zion

Zion has earlier been portrayed as a mother who gives birth to the Servant (49:1-13). She is then portrayed as a mother who is comforted by the return of her wayward children (49:14-26). The unexpected increase of her children makes necessary an enlarged dwelling (54:1-3).

The present passage give prominence to the sudden birth of the **man-child**, the new **nation** and **land**, and **her children**. The man-child is the long awaited Servant, the Messiah born of the spiritual Zion. **Who hath heard such a thing**? Here is something that is unparalleled in history. Immediately following the birth of the Man-Child, a nation, its land, and Zion's children are brought forth. Only the entrance of Christ into the world and the events of Pentecost can be in view here; the Son was exalted, the new nation was established, and Zion's children began to multiply (7-8).

Jehovah now asks, **Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth**? Having in his eternal purpose planned a scheme of redemption, foretold it by his prophets, and controlled history to that end, **Shall I that cause to bring forth shut the womb**, not bringing it to birth or fulfillment? This plan of redemption is the central theme of revelation; all other things are but contributors to its fulfillment. This vivid foretelling of his purpose together with it s achievement is a stumbling block not to faith, but to unbelief (9).

The Servant to come will comfort all that mourn for and in Zion (61:2-3). At his coming mourning will cease (60:20). That time has now come; the mourners who love Zion will now rejoice. As an infant finds satisfaction and comfort at its mother's breasts, so shall those who love Zion and rejoice in her find complete satisfaction, and **be delighted with the abundance of her glory** (10-11).

If the people had obeyed God, Israel would have possessed "peace . . . as a river, and . . . righteousness as the waves of the sea" (48:18); all the glory of which the nations boasted (60:5; 61:6) would have been hers. **For thus saith Jehovah, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream**. As it so often does, peace" here means welfare and prosperity, completion and fulfillment. In a beautiful picture of a suckling babe drawing nourishment from its mother's breasts, being borne upon the side in Oriental fashion (cf. 60:4), and being bounced upon the knee in a playful and affectionate manner, Jehovah describes the future innocence and blessings of his people (12).

As one, either a child or a man, **whom his mother comforteth** (cf. 49:15), Zion's children will be comforted in the spiritual Jerusalem (13).

And ye shall see it – the people will personally realize and experience the blessings of Zion in which they rejoice. **And your bones shall flourish**, grow and be made strong with freshness, vigor, and a new life such as characterized the early church and caused it to spread throughout the world. These blessings will be bestowed by the mighty hand of Jehovah, which **shall be known toward his servants**. As so often in Isaiah's writing, he presents a contrast: Jehovah will bless Zion and her children, **and he will have indignation against his enemies**. His indignation is set forth in the following verses (14).

Vv. 15-17 – Indignation Against the Idolaters

Throughout the scripture fire is used repeatedly as a symbol of divine punishment, of Jehovah's wrath and indignation (see Psa. 97:3; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 22:21; Nah 1:6; Isa. 29:5-6; 30:27-31; 42:25). Now Isaiah adds, **For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke with flames of fire**. This is a vivid and dramatic picture of Jehovah's judgment against the rebellious idolaters in contrast to his blessings upon Zion (15).

By the fire of his righteous indignation and **by his sword**, the instrument which he uses, whether Babylon (Ezek. 30:24-25) or Rome (Luke 21:24, esp. v. 24), Jehovah will execute his judgment **upon all flesh**. The judgment extends beyond the Jews to include all who are in rebellion against him (for the phrase "all flesh" cf. Gen. 6:13; Lev. 17:14; Isa. 40:5-6; 49:26; Jer. 32:27). **And the slain of Jehovah shall be many**, for many rebel against him and shall come under the judgment. Several commentators suggest that this language is looking toward the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Matt. 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24). When the Roman Empire (the fourth beast in Daniel's vision) was itself brought to an end, it too was destroyed by divine judgment (Dan. 7:11, 26) (16).

While there are some questions about v. 17, it is clear that instead of going to the sanctuary of God to worship him in truth, the people are going into gardens of their own creation (cf. 1:29) to worship idols (cf. 65:3-5). This verse may be a summary of the idolatry, rebellion, and spiritual temper of the Jews from the days of Isaiah to the coming of Christ (cf. v. 3), at which time **they** (the nation and the Old Testament system) **shall come to an end together**. In language that the people of his day can understand, Isaiah is describing the spiritual condition that the Servant will find in the nation and which will bring about its destruction. That condition is the result of the people's conduct throughout their entire history. Because they have acted like heathen, they must suffer the consequences of heathenism (17).

Vv. 18-24 – Jehovah's Glory Proclaimed to the World and the Response

This verse marks the transition to the final word of hope. Its sense is that **their works and their thoughts** are cause for gathering **all nations and tongues** and **they shall seed [Jehovah's] glory**. He will gather all the peoples of the world including ethnic (nations) and linguistic (tongues) to see his power and righteousness. The opening stands in sharp contrast to the subject of v. 17. Those persons, caught in the web of their own attempts to sanctify themselves and to project their religious attainments on the world, will simply disappear. "But" God will use their failed efforts as a foil to draw the world to himself and to the true light that is in him alone, and in those who reflect him (cf. 60:1-3). The language of Matt. 24:31[255] may reflect this language in the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem. (18).

The sign that Jehovah will give is not identified. Suggestions range from the resurrection of the Messiah to the establishment of the church and its power in the world to the destruction of Jerusalem. The clause **and I will send such as escape of them unto the nations** sug-

[255] "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." This language clearly applies to the destruction of Jerusalem (see Matt. 24:34).

gests that the sign may have been the judgment of destruction that befell the apostate nation and its city and temple. From among the survivors of the judgment, men will be sent unto the various nations with a message. Those who had **not heard my fame, neither seen my glory**, will hear of it through the message of those who escape and are sent by Jehovah to the ends of the earth. Surely this speaks of the work of the apostles and other early Christians who carried "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4) to the world of their day (19).

They (those sent to the ends of the earth) **shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto Jehovah**. With the "middle wall of partition" broken down (Eph. 2:14), Gentiles from among all the nations will be brought with the redeemed Jews as brethren, as one new man, unto Jehovah. They will be brought to him **for an oblation**, a bloodless offering (the Old Testament meal offering). A great mixed caravan will hasten to Jehovah; they will come **upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters** (the Hebrew word is translated "covered wagons" in Num 7:3), **and upon mules, and upon dromedaries** (swift beasts, KJV; the Hebrew word occurs only here). In Isaiah's day these were the swiftest means of travel. The redeemed will be brought to Jehovah's **holy mountain Jerusalem** (cf. 56:7; 57:13), "the mountain of Jehovah's house (2:2-4). As the children of Israel have brought their oblations to Jehovah in clean vessels, so will the redeemed from the nations be brought in cleanness to the house of Jehovah (20).

No longer will the ministers in Jehovah's house be taken exclusively from among the descendants of Levi and Aaron, but **of them also**, the Gentile converts brought to the holy mountain, **will I take for priests** (cf. 61:6). All the redeemed under Christ are "a royal priesthood" who offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ (1 Pet. 2:9). Men purchased "of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" have been made "a kingdom of priests; and they reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10) (21).

For as the new heavens and the new earth . . . shall remain . . . so shall your seed remain before me. The seed, a faithful remnant, will

serve God (cf. Ps. 22:30-31). Confusing old national Israel with the new Israel is a chief error among religious teachers today. In his allegory based on the history of Hagar and Sarah, and Ishmael and Isaac, sons after the flesh and after the Spirit, respectively, Paul says, "Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman" (Gal. 4:21-31). Though fleshly (national) Israel is cast off (cf. 65:15), spiritual Israel is ever before Jehovah (cf. 49:16). It is the seed and name of the new spiritual Israel that shall endure before his presence (22).

Phrasing a spiritual truth in the idiom of his day, Isaiah writes, **From one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another** (Isaiah is here referring to specific times of worship prescribed by Jehovah) **shall all flesh come to worship**. The new moons and Sabbaths of the old dispensation are taken away (1:14; 2 Cor. 5:16; Heb. 10:9), for they are only a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:16-17). **All flesh**, that is, all those of the new spiritual order, will come before Jehovah to worship. That all mankind will come before him not in physical Jerusalem, but in the new spiritual city, is clearly apparent from the impossibility of the former. Under the new order all who make up spiritual Zion will come before the Lord to worship at divinely prescribed times (23).

As the previous sections of Part Two (40-66) concluded with a dark picture of the fate of the rebellious – There is no peace . . . to the wicked" (48:22; 57:20), so this final section ends with an even darker picture that vividly portrays the destruction of sinners. This picture is not to be interpreted in a literal manner, but in the light of its context. As gold and silver have been used to describe the glory of future Zion (60:17), so fire and worms now depict the end of the transgressors. As the faithful worshipers (v. 23) go forth from before Jehovah, they behold the terrible state of the apostates. Isaiah is probably contrasting the new spiritual Israel and old fleshly Israel. The latter are as **dead bodies** that shall never be brought to a full end as a people (Jer. 30:11). For the worms or maggots that consume them **shall not die**, and the fire of divine rebuke and judgment that torments them shall never be quenched (cf. vv. 15-16). Thus the people whom God chose, but who chose to reject him and his Christ, **shall be an abhorring unto all**

flesh (cf. 43:28). In the sight of God and of the righteous, then, there is a clear contrast between spiritual Zion and her children on one hand, and physical Jerusalem and her children on the other. This contrast foreshadows the contrast between the ultimate destiny of the worshipers of Jehovah and the wicked at the end of time. The infinite difference between the glory of God and of the righteous and the terrible doom of idolatry, sin, and the wicked is graphically set forth. What a fitting climax to Isaiah's majestically spiritual book!