



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of ISAIAH part 2

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ISAIAH 40:1—43:28

If there is one feature of Isaiah's book more prominent than others it is the prominence given to the revelation of an **Anointed One** from God (i.e., Messiah) sent to deliver man from sin. The first part of Isaiah's prophecy (chapters 1-39) stresses the Messiah's descent from David. He will be "Immanuel" (i.e., God-with-us). He will be "Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace." He will be Conquering King, and Righteous Judge. He will establish Jehovah's righteous rule over all the nations of the earth. All this is in Isaiah, chapters 1-39. These concepts of the Messiah are present in most other prophetic books.

The really *unique* message of Isaiah is from chapters 40-66 about the Servant-natured-Messiah and his spiritual-natured-kingdom. In chapters 40-43 God introduces his Servant-Messiah by telling what the *purpose* for the coming of the Servant will be. In chapters 44-48 the Servant-Messiah's *power* is described. In chapters 49-53 the Servant-Messiah's *program* of redemption is outlined. Actually, God had called Israel to be his servant to manifest his glory and righteousness to the nations, but servant-hood was not on the agenda for most of the Israelites. It was their constant temptation to serve themselves or to think of the nations being made by God to serve them. They definitely had no understanding of the Messiah as a humble, servant-minded, self-effacing, acquiescent individual. Even when the Messiah finally arrived, historically, and physically, on the stage of history, his apostles refused to accept him as a "Servant-Messiah." Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet (John 13:8). Jesus had to say bluntly to these apostles as they strove for position, "I am among you as he that serves" Lk. 22:27. Paul would finally write, "He took upon himself the form of a servant" Phil. 2:7.

So what is this to you and to me? Isaiah, God's messenger, predicted salvation for mankind through **The Servant-Messiah (God in the flesh serving people)—THEREFORE IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT JESUS CONDUCTED HIS EARTHLY TENURE AS A "SERVANT."** Isaiah takes 14 chapters to give detailed information and emphatic exhortations about **The Servant-Messiah**—THEREFORE, WE MUST STUDY IT, BELIEVE IT AND SURRENDER OUR MINDS AND LIVES TO THAT AS THE WILL OF GOD! This means we must divest ourselves of all human pride and all human self-righteousness and **allow** God, himself, to **serve us!** In the matters of atonement, justification, salvation, sanctification and ultimately, glorification, there is no way we can serve, either ourselves or God—he does the ultimate serving—our serving him is only humble, grateful reciprocation. Our serving God is simply that of thanksgiving and praise for **his service**. Our serving God is that of glorifying **his** name for **his** service to us! That's how Isaiah sees it—and we must see it that way, too!

Nachamu is the Hebrew word translated, “comfort.” It is the same word from which *Nahum* comes. It is sometimes translated, “repent.” In the Greek NT it is the word *parakaleo* or Paraclete, (e.g., “Comforter” in John 14:16, etc.). We are told in Acts 4:36 that “Barnabas” means “son of *parakleseos* (i.e., “consolation”). It means in both Hebrew and Greek, literally, “to strengthen, give help, or aid.” The *initial* command was for Isaiah to *strengthen* the remnant with his predictions of the coming Servant-Messiah and his servant-oriented-kingdom (chapters 40-66). The *ultimate* fulfillment is for the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The Hebrew phrase, *dabberu ‘al-lev*, translated, “speak tenderly” means literally, “speak upon the heart.” It means “to win someone over, to convince, persuade” (cf. Gen. 34:3; Judges 19:3). In Genesis 50:21 Joseph “spoke upon the heart” of his brothers to build their confidence in his intentions toward them. Comforting, strengthening, consoling, requires the use of persuasion, logic and reasoning with love—not just emotions. Israel is to be persuaded, by God’s truth, in reasoning, that her warfare is ended, her iniquity is pardoned, and she has received double for all her sins. Isaiah is using the “predictive-present-tense” here. None of this is finally accomplished for Israel until the “**Voice**” (i.e., John the Baptist) appears preparing the way for the Messiah. These three things (underlined) form a prologue to the rest of Isaiah’s book; a victorious, powerful Messiah; an atoning Servant who is God’s covenant; a glorious kingdom for all men. Daniel predicts 490 years of “trouble” for the Jews from his time in Babylon and their release until the Messiah comes (Dan. 9:24-27). Daniels says that at the end of 490 years the following redemptive works will have been accomplished with the coming of God’s “Anointed” (Messiah)—“finish the transgression, put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal both vision and prophet, and anoint a most holy place.” **So, the comforting of God’s people is ultimately predicated upon the pardoning of iniquity and bringing in everlasting righteousness, etc., in the Messiah!**

The “**Voice**” was John the Baptist. Three Gospel writers indicate God’s confirmation of this! (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4—see also Matt. 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-35). John the Baptist had the climactic job of preparing an *immediate* “way” (i.e., message from God) upon which the Incarnate King of kings might travel into the hearts of men. In ancient times, kings and potentates when traveling sent messengers and workers ahead of them to announce their coming and to remove obstacles (such as mountains and wildernesses) from their path—and to literally build a road where there was none upon which the “king” might travel to his destination. Sin was the “wilderness” and “obstacle” standing in the way of the Incarnate Lord into people’s hearts. John the Baptist preached **repentance and immersion in water for the remission of sins** (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). John the Baptist made ready the “way” into the hearts of some (including some future apostles of Christ). Luke 16:16 indicates the John the Baptist’s *immersion for the remission of sins* was an announcement that the Old Law of Moses was being **fulfilled** in the coming “kingdom of the Messiah.” There would be no more animal sacrifices for sin—they were temporary and to be fulfilled **once for all** in the **One Perfect Sacrifice—Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God that takes away sin.”** (See Heb. 10:1-19, etc.). John’s immersion for remission of sins was God’s will and was efficacious until the death and resurrection of Christ and the day of Pentecost. After Pentecost, everyone wishing to be forgiven must be immersed (baptized) by the authority (i.e., “in the name of”) Jesus Christ (see Acts 19:1-7). THE MESSAGE OF

JOHN THE BAPTIST that straightened people's hearts out so the Lord could find passage there (or "free course", Jn. 8:37) is: "All flesh is grass...but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isa. 40:5) People must acknowledge their inability to save themselves and accept God's Savior to atone for them. Only the **gospel** "straightens" human hearts so that God can find access into them. Mankind will not be convinced of its lostness by anything but the gospel of Christ (revealed through the Spirit in the Spirit's word—the Bible). Isaiah 40:5 is quoted and applied by Peter (1 Pet. 1:13-24) to the Gospel as the word of God which abides forever. The construction of the original Hebrew language makes Zion the **bringer** of good tidings rather than the receiver. She (Zion, the Lord's "church" in both OT and NT) is the proclaimer (40:9). Isaiah predicts earlier that the word of the Lord would go forth from Zion (Isa. 2:3). The word is to be proclaimed "powerfully" (Heb. *koach*) and "fearlessly" (Heb. *tiyraaiy*). The word is "Behold, God is coming as Almighty." The word "arm" in the Hebrew scriptures usually symbolizes **power** and often symbolizes the **Messiah** (Isa. 51:4-5; 52:7-10; 53:1; Luke 1:51). What better climax to this passage than that of the "Shepherd." The Messiah-Shepherd is one of the richest concepts of OT prophecy (Ezek. 34:20-34; Micah 5:1-4; Zech. 11:7-14; 13:7). Jesus called himself the "Good Shepherd" (Lk. 15:3-7; Jn. 10:1-30) and his audience as a "flock" that needed shepherding (Matt. 9:36-38; Jn. 10:1-30). Isaiah was writing of the glorious future for the benefit of the people of his day. His task was to preserve a remnant of faithful Jews who would be able to endure the disintegration of their nation, go into captivity, and return to carry on the Messianic destiny. This remnant was to pass on its faith in the prophetic promises that this destiny would be preserved by God and ultimately fulfilled, if not in their lives, in some glorious era to come. There may be an *initial* reference in this prologue to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine in the days of Zerubbabel. But, unquestionably, the ultimate focus of the great redemption promised here is to the Messiah and his kingdom, the church of Christ.

Seven attributes of God in Isaiah 40:12-31: (1) Creator; (2) Omniscient; (3) Omnipotent; (4) A Person—not a "thing"; (5) Judge; (6) Eternal; (7) Sustenance of Everything. Isaiah spends much time and space in his prophetic "book" to characterize Jehovah-God because God's people were not, at that time, prepared to bring forth the "Comforter" (i.e., Messiah) or "Shepherd"—because the Messiah-Shepherd **will be God-Incarnate!** They do not even know the God who speaks to them through the prophets! They have made for themselves gods of wood and metal. They **think** they know him; they have compared him to idol-gods, but he is not like them at all—he is not like anything or anyone else, for he is Absolute Sovereign. There is no way to make a comparison to him! Jehovah-God has measured the waters and enclosed the dust in a measure, and weighted the mountains in scales. *This is a reference to the principle of geophysics now known as isostasy (i.e., "equal weights").* The waters and the land masses and the atmosphere of earth were created with the precision necessary to cause the proper gravitational and hydrological functions to sustain life. The Hebrew word *shalish* is translated "measure" and means literally, "**a third.**" Did you know the surface of the earth consists of land and water and the land covers about 57,584,000 square miles which is about 3/10 (30%) or about 1/3 of the earth's surface? *How did Isaiah know that 2700 years ago?* **By revelation from God!** God is **Omniscient**. The Hebrew word *tikken* translated "directed" (49:13) may also be translated, "measured"—who has

“measured” the Spirit of the Lord?” He is immeasurable and unsearchable (Job 5:9; Psa. 145:3; Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33). Compared to God’s sovereignty and power, all the power and wisdom of all the nations put together is but “a drop in the bucket.” It is not that God does not care for the world—he does. But as far as their opposition to the fulfilling of his purposes of “comfort” for believers, it is “less than nothing—vanity.” His Being and his Sovereignty is not dependent upon them. They do not create him—he creates them! He does not need them—they need him. If all creation were a temple, Lebanon an altar, its lordly woods the fire-wood, and its countless beasts the sacrifice, it would not be an offering sufficient to make Jehovah depend on man (Psa. 50:3-15). Since God is infinitely powerful, wise and unsearchable, it is sheer stupidity for people to attempt to carve a likeness of anything or anyone in wood or stone and think he has reproduced the totality of God! It is stupidity for people to think they can reduce God to their human thoughts or ideas or experiences. The only possibility of man reaching beyond the experienced is that the Unexperientable One shall reveal Himself in human experience. This he did in Jesus Christ! The word “idol” in 40:19 is *pesel* in Hebrew and means, “image.” God cannot be represented by any “image” or “form” (Deut. 4:14-24). Human beings have an insatiable desire to “see” some form of God (Jn. 14:8-11), yet no one has ever “seen” him (Jn. 1:18; 6:46; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Matt. 11:27; 1 Jn. 4:20). The stupidity of it all is tragic when even the poor will deprive themselves of necessities to indulge in having “idols or images” of God made in silver and gold. There are two sources from which these stupid people should have perceived the nature of Jehovah and prepared for his future coming—the word of God and the world of God (Isa. 40:21-26). Have they not known? Has it not been told them from the beginning? YES, THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD....YES, THEY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! **But God sent them prophets for another 700 years to TELL THEM AGAIN!** GOD IS MERCIFUL AND UNWILLING THAT ANY SHOULD BE LOST! *But there is, known only to God, a limit to his divine patience!*

God expects the remnant to respond to his coming chastening with faith and obedience to the prophets. The conquest of God, which is the purpose of the Servant-Messiah (spiritually) will be *initially* promoted when Cyrus, king of Persia, releases the Jews from captivity (see 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Isa. 44:23—45:25)—**but will be realized ultimately in the Messiah—Jesus Christ.** Jehovah commands, “Silence!” He is going to tell the world, through Isaiah, how he is going to run the world! Mankind insists it is going to tell God how the world is to be run—but God says through Isaiah, “Shut up, world, *I’m* going to tell *you!*” The “islands” are all the peoples of the Mediterranean and Aegean coast-lands and inlands; the Lord is challenging those opposing his redemptive program. The outcome of the challenge will determine who “runs the world.” God is going to “stir up one from the east” (Cyrus) (see Isa. 44:28; 45:1; 45:13; 46:11; 48:14-16). One has only to read the history of Persian conquests to see the fulfillment of verses 41:5-7. Isaiah is predicting that although Cyrus and the Persians shall be raised up by God to execute his judgment on the heathen opposition to God’s kingdom-work, the heathen will tremble but they will not repent. They will cling to their gods of wood and stone and encourage one another to make even more gods. New and more gods did not stop Cyrus (under God’s sovereign guidance). Idol-gods are impotent—they cannot move or speak or think. God would use Cyrus to fulfill a portion of the divine plan of redemption—release from captivity of the remnant. God chose the Hebrews for

special servant-hood. They were to serve him as a consecrated priesthood (Ex. 19:5-6; Lev. 25:55; Deut. 4:5-7; 7:6-8; 14:2; 26:18-19). They were to serve as a witness to the heathen nations around them of the One True God (Isa. 41:8-13). He did not choose them according to human standards—Israel was not large in numbers, rich or powerful (Deut. 7:7). He chose them by his sovereign grace—because he loved them (Deut. 7:8; 10:12-22). Isaiah is encouraging his people (who are trembling at the threat of Assyria and Babylon) by reminding them that if God can take a family of nomads (like Abraham) and deliver them from the former mighty Egypt, he will go on and fulfill his covenant by delivering them now from their enemies. But they must surrender to his destiny for them—servant-hood. The people of Isaiah’s nation will have to go into captivity. God needs to chasten and purify a remnant to carry on the Messianic work. But, they need not fear that God is unable to fulfill his covenant promises—he will put to shame and confound their enemies. He will deliver them. He holds their hand! Their troubles did not cease with the end of the Babylonian exile, of course, for they were oppressed (both spiritually and physically) continually until the coming of the Messiah. **This passage has its final fulfillment in the spiritual release brought about by the Messiah.** The Jews (and Christians) went right on being persecuted. The Jews who rejected the Messiah **never** found **spiritual release**. The Hebrew word for “**worm**” (41:14) is *tola’ath* and is the name of the coccus worm which was used in making scarlet dye. The same word is used in Psa. 22:6 referring to the scorn men will show the Messiah. Here Isaiah uses the word to show how the heathen look upon the Messianic nation and its God. But the “**worm**” is going to **win**! It will “thresh” its enemies and crush them. **This applies to the ultimate victory in the Messiah over death and the grave and sin.** It will glorify God—not the Jews. The “water in the wilderness” refers to the **spiritual thirst** the Jews will have because they have disobeyed God’s law. At no time has God ever physically watered **all** the wastelands of Palestine. But when he sent the **Water of Life, the Living Water—the Messiah**—he did water all the wastelands of sin! God completely reversed the spiritual situation from destitution to abundance in Christ. God made an *oasis* in the desert of *sin*—Christ and the Church (see notes on Isa. ch. 35).

Jehovah-God promises to **prove** his claims that his covenant people need not fear the threats of their enemies (41:21-29) God is going to prove the impotency of heathen gods (idols). God **predicts** the raising up of Cyrus (**200 years before** it happens) and that Cyrus will conquer all their present enemies. Which of the present idol-gods can predict otherwise?—and have it come to pass? **NONE!** God will send one from the north (Cyrus). He will come from the north across the “fertile crescent” because there was no other way to come into Palestine from Mesopotamia in ancient times, and survive! God challenges the people of Judah to ask the idols they may be inclined to worship about this. God says Cyrus will be irresistible. He will do with the enemies of God’s people what a potter does with his clay. Which pagan idol or prophet foreknew any events to show they knew Israel’s destiny or the future history of Mesopotamian empires? Have any of them ever been able to say about their idol—“That idol was right?” **NOT A ONE!** Not one word about Israel’s deliverance through the one from the East ever came from the heathen oracles. The contest is over—God is vindicated!

The **Servant** of Isaiah 41:1-4 is indubitably the **Messiah** (see Matt. 12:17-21). The

Hebrew word is *‘avediy* and means, “bond-servant” like the Greek word, *doulou*, describing Jesus’ servant-hood in Philippians 1:7. It is really “slave”—the lowliest of servants. The Hebrew word *bekhiyriy* means “Choice One” (or “Chosen One”) and *ratsethah* means, “willing acceptance” and is translated, “delights.” Of all the servants at God’s disposal (angels-humans-all creation) **this One was the only acceptable One who “delighted” God and God chose him—the Son—the Messiah!** This **Servant** stands in peculiar relationship to Jehovah, he is the Son (cf. Jn. 1:18, etc.). This makes his servant-hood astounding. Many servants have been elevated to son-ship—but no father wants his son to suffer the indignities of servant-hood (Phil. 2:5; Lk. 15:19;ff; Heb. 10:1-10). This **Servant** will be sustained by the Spirit of the Living God without measure (Jn. 3:31-36), and in him will all the fulness of God dwell (John 1:1-18; Col. 1:19; 2:9). He is coming to establish justification for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. The nature of the **Servant** will be diametrically opposed to all human concepts of Savior-hood or Messiah-ship! He will: (a) not put on a spectacular show and make a lot of noise; (b) not advertise nor hire a public relations man to create for him a popular image; (c) not call attention to himself, but to the Father; (d) not seek his own glory (Jn. 5:41; 8:50); (e) not exploit the weak—he will not break the spirit or quench the goodness in anyone; (f) come humbly (Zech. 9:9) to establish justice; (g) come to save, not to win the acclaims of men; (h) come to serve, not be served. If you do not let Jesus “serve” you according to his character and will, you have no part with him (Jn. 13:6-11).

The **Servant-Messiah (Isa. 42:6)** is sent as a direct reflection or Incarnation of the Lord himself (Heb. 1:1-4). He is “called” by the Lord in righteousness. **THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!!—The Messiah, himself, is God’s Covenant.** God’s Everlasting Covenant (the New Covenant)—the covenant intended all along and only symbolized and typified by the Old, was in **THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST! The Covenant is The Person!** “All the promises of God find their Yea in Him” (2 Cor. 1:20-21). Christ obtained our atonement; he became man, sinless man, and then became sin for man, that he might become the absolute righteousness God demanded of men—for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Our covenant is not really in a systematic religion of commandments—our covenant is in a **relationship of faith and love with a Person—Jesus Christ—so that his nature is imputed and reproduced in us.** All the promises of salvation and the blessings of sanctification are “in” Christ because **HE** is our covenant! Opening the “spiritual” eyes of the blind, and bringing out “spiritual” prisoners will be done in the Person (and work) of Jesus Christ (see Lk. 4:16ff and Isaiah 61:1-2). The people of Isaiah’s day (or any other day, for that matter) may as well stop trying to find access to God through religion, whether Babylonian or Jewish, for access to God is through the Person-hood of Jesus Christ. God will give his glory to no other person or religion or thing. He glorifies himself in his Son when the Son accomplishes the Everlasting Covenant. When God accomplishes the redemption of creation in the **Servant-Son-Messiah**, those who believe and appropriate the Person of the Messiah will “sing a new song to Jehovah—it will be a song of Justice—God’s justice for sin taken care of by the Perfect Man—Jesus Christ.

The whole section of the **Servant** (i.e., Isaiah chapters 40-53) is a kaleidoscopic view of the correlation of Israel and the Messiah. Israel was called for the Messianic purpose but she defaulted by her rebellion and idolatry. God must chasten her to purify her.

After her purification she will be redeemed and from her will come the Messiah and his Kingdom (the NT church). God will protect Israel in her chastening. When she is forced to go through waters into captivity, or put to the fires (as were the 3 Hebrew youths in Dan. 3). The point is Israel need not fear extinction for God is powerful and mighty to save from anything. If Israel (a remnant, at least) will carry on the Messianic call, God will give other nations as ransom for his chosen. Others will suffer while the faithful of Israel find deliverance. From the time the promise was given to Jacob and accepted by the faithful patriarchs like Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Israel became **precious** to the Lord. From that time on God placed the interests of Israel above those of other peoples. Of course Israel did not merit this evaluation of preciousness; the point is God's grace. The captivity was symbolic of the estrangement between the chosen and God. Israel willfully and deliberately separated herself from God's holiness (Isa. 30:1-14). The separation was not God's choosing. To teach Israel vividly her need for God's gracious presence for her good, God delivered her to captivity. God is talking to his "spiritual" Israel—not the unbelieving ethnic Israel for he refers to them as "everyone called by My name." The ultimate fulfillment of the **rebirth of a spiritual Israel** is, of course, in the **Servant-Messiah (Jesus Christ) and his church (Gal. 6:15-16; Rom. 9:6-18, etc.)**. Israel was called by God to be his "servant" as a testimony among the nations manifesting Jehovah's sovereignty (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:6-7; 14:2; 26:18; 28:10; Psa. 135:4; Lev. 20:24-26; Deut. 7:6). Israel had not fulfilled her purpose (Amos 3:9-11; Jer. 2:9-13; 18:13). She really testified to heathenism by her idolatry! When **The Servant-Messiah** comes and becomes **The Covenant**, Israel, the new, regenerated Israel, will be what God wants her to be—his "messenger" to the heathen. The word will go forth from Zion! Israel's destiny, both Old Israel and New Israel, is to be a servant-witness, imitating **The Servant-Witness-Messiah (Jesus)**. Israel is not called to be a mighty worldly power dominating other nations and exercising worldliness. That was never, and shall never be, Israel's calling. A witness does not tell what he thinks or feels. He tells what he has seen and heard. What Israel has seen is that only Jehovah can save. They are to testify of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah. They have seen and heard this first-hand. This is the truth. Anything less is a lie. They have also seen that none of the false gods are able to save. They have seen God's love, his holiness, his mercy, his wrath. All this they are to witness; with words and lives.

As grand and glorious as the great physical deliverances of Israel were, they are warned not to let their hope rest on them. God was even then **doing a new thing**—God had already laid in Zion the precious "**stone**" (i.e., **Messianic hope**). **The Messianic HOPE was the "foundation" upon which Israel could build its faith that God would deliver them from exile and eventually bring forth from the faithful remnant the Messiah!** The "**new thing**" is the preparation God was making to send forth **The Servant-Messiah** who will himself be **The Covenant**. **The Suffering-Servant (Isa. 53) will literally BE God's covenant for mankind!** Even in Isaiah's day it was beginning to be apparent to those who had the faith to "see" it—Isaiah "saw" it (John 12:41). The revelations of Daniel (chs. 7-12) and Ezekiel (chs. 40-48) outlined the mission of Israel as prototypical of the redemption for all mankind from their captivity in sin. Many of the prophets recognized this "**new thing**" and anxiously desired to know when it would come to its completion (1 Pet. 1:10-12). God's "**new thing**" is described figuratively as the reclamation of mankind and of nature—all of God's

creation will be redeemed. That is what Paul says in Romans 8:18-39. Part of the **“new thing”** God was doing was preparing Israel to be perfected (brought to her goal) in her ability to **please God** (43:22-24). Part of the **“new thing”** God was doing was preparing to bring to perfection (bring to its goal) Israel’s **pardon** (43:25-28). BUT IT ALL HAD TO BE DONE, FIRST, BY ISRAEL (JUDAH’S) EXILE AND 490 YEARS OF “TROUBLED TIMES” (Dan. 9:24-27). **Then, the Suffering-Servant would come and bring all Israel (including Gentiles) to “perfection” (see the book of Hebrews for “perfect”).**

ISAIAH 44:1—48:22

Introduction

Power! What is it? The dictionary has many synonyms for it. Etymologically, the word “power” comes from the Latin word *posse* (“the possible”) and means, “to be able.” The present participle of *posse* is *potent*. It denotes the ability or capacity to act or produce an effect. It may connote the possession of sway or influence over others. The Anglo-Norman word *poer* is from the French *pouvoir* and Anglo-Norman *poer* became *power*. Synonyms for the English word **power** are: “force, energy, strength, might; authority, jurisdiction, control, command, sway dominion.” Probably the most often used Hebrew word for “power” is *kouakh*; and the most often used Greek word is *dunamis* from which we get English “dynamite.”

Power! People are fascinated by it, greedy for it, and unable to use it properly. People have power only in secondary and limited quantities, but they never cease to grasp for it in the ultimate. It was the devil, in Eden, who lied and promised human beings they could have ultimate power. The devil knew all along no one else but God could have ultimate power—because the devil tried to rebel against God and failed!

Someone has said: “Two human attributes are, probably, responsible for more misery, death, hopelessness, war, and starvation than everything else in the world put together. One of these is the **lust for personal power**; the other is the constant desire for easy physical security without personal responsibility.”

Power is not of itself good or bad, of course, but becomes what its holder makes of it. Let us be grateful that our God, who has **absolute power**, uses his power for the absolute **good** of mankind. This he demonstrated in his **Servant-Messiah, Jesus Christ**. The gospel is the **power of God** unto **salvation**! God’s power in the gospel does not produce despair or lostness. God has the power to produce in people total desperation, total guilt, total dispossession—but he pleads with people that they let his power for **good** produce **grace, love, and regeneration in them**.

So, our lesson today will be a prediction, in figurative and symbolic language, of the sovereign power the **Servant of Jehovah (the Messiah)** was to exercise when he was to come. God himself proved the **Servant** would exercise such sovereignty for good by God’s exercise of such power for good to the people of Isaiah’s own time. What God did and does, the **Servant** will do—**for God and the Servant are One and the Same!**

Israel/Judah was not even a nation when God **chose** them. He took them and “formed” them into a nation for his purposes. But they rebelled against his purposes; but **not all of them**. There would be a “remnant” (*Jeshurun*, Hebrew for “upright, righteous, esteemed”) which would maintain its uprightness. This “remnant” need not fear the impending judgment and chastening of the captivity, for God would deliver them and their progeny from captivity and continue his redemptive purpose through them and

their descendants. Then, Isaiah, leaping down the centuries from the “remnant” to the times of the **Messiah**, says God will pour out his Spirit upon the descendants of the remnant (44:3). Those “descendants” will include those who **“surname”** themselves with the name, **“Israel.”** A “surname” is “an additional name.” In other words, these “surnamed” people would not originally have the name “Israel” but would *adopt* it as their name. This indubitably is fulfilled in the NT church (see Gal. 6:15-16; Heb. 12:22ff). The emphatic willingness of the Gentile-believer (i.e., the Christian) to allow himself to be “surnamed” “Israel” is an astounding prophecy in view of the contempt most of the heathen world had for the Hebrew and his God! It would take a converted Gentile to do that! Gentiles would be so honored by the name “Israel” they would figuratively write it on their hand (“tattoo”) (49:16). God was going to give **life** to his redemptive people through his Spirit in a future age from Isaiah when even the Gentiles would partake of that life.

It took courage for Isaiah to speak against idolatry. Idolatry had been approved by the king (Ahaz) and practiced by the majority of the people (see 2 Kings ch. 16, and 2 Chron. C. 28). Isaiah shames the foolishness of the people who make and worship idols as much as he does the idols themselves. Those who make them are *tohu* in Hebrew, or “void empty, vain.” Through verse 17 Isaiah gives his story of the man roasting his dinner with half the wood of a tree trunk and with the other half of the same tree the man carves an idol, bows down before it and says, “Deliver me, for thou art my god!” Water cannot rise above its level. The human cannot produce the Divine—not even an image of the divine! Even when the human produces an image of the human it is not a live human—it is only stone, wood or metal. Most idols are much more grotesque than human images—they are images of animals and creeping things. Out of the same log a man makes a god and fuels a fire to cook his meal! *What supernatural guidance did the craftsman use to decide from which half to make a god, or which half to burn in the fire?!* What if he really burned his god for fuel and made the idol out of fire wood? The people of Judah “plastered shut” (Heb. *tach*) their own eyes (v. 18). The phrase, “no one considers” literally reads, “no one carries back into their heart.” They rejected any **reflective** thinking about their idolatry. They didn’t want to think about it—just do it! (Isa. 30:8-11). They were like those of John 3:18-20 who refused to come to the light lest their deeds be exposed for what they really were. They were certainly not incapable of understanding the stupidity of idolatry—if they would only THINK about it—but they just wanted to “feel” and “do” it. SO MUCH LIKE OUR PRESENT GENERATION OF IDOLATERS! Isaiah makes a very penetrating evaluation of idolatry in 44:18-20. The man who makes idols of wood and metal, so easily reduced to ashes, has been led astray from truth by a heart overpowered with **self-delusion** and cannot be saved! It never occurs to him to say, “Isn’t all this a big lie?” The most enslaving delusion is *self-delusion*, because it has to do with selfish feelings—not objective truth. As long as a man accepts only what agrees with his feelings and desires, and is unwilling to accept that something may be valid truth **outside** and **beyond** his own autonomy, he cannot be saved. Man cannot save himself, and if man reduces God to man’s level he is lost—totally. God, and his truth, are above and beyond men. Isaiah 44:21-28 is God’s message to Judah to **remember WHO Jehovah IS!** This is the very essence of Biblical religion and theology—the realization of the objective Personhood of God! Biblical religion is not how man “feels,” but what man

acknowledges about WHO God is and WHAT God has done and said he has done! If people do not acknowledge God, they will acknowledge some other god. Human beings **must** have a god. They will make one of wood or stone or even of themselves. Judah is to remember Jehovah-God. He manifested himself to Judah in special ways. If Judah does not remember Jehovah she will be seduced into idolatry (and she was).

Isaiah predicts (44:28—45:13) God was going to **anoint** (Hebrew, *meshicho*, from which we get the English word, “Messiah”) a pagan emperor named **Cyrus** to deliver his people from exile (into which they had not yet gone—100 years after Isaiah Judah went into exile around 600 B.C.). **Cyrus** was not even **born** when Isaiah made this prediction—he was born at least 150 years later! HOW DID ISAIAH KNOW CYRUS WHEN CYRUS’ MOTHER WAS NOT EVEN BORN, YET?! He knew it because God was revealing it to Isaiah ahead of time! God used many “servants” from among the heathen to fulfill his redemptive plan (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Dan. chs. 7-12; Jer. 27:1-11, etc.). **Cyrus** was one of the most interesting figures of ancient history. He was convinced that he was **the** man of destiny for the world. He wrote that his god (Marduk) had selected him to rule the world. He released most of the peoples, especially the Hebrews (i.e., their descendants) taken into exile by the Assyrians and Babylonians. He helped finance the rebuilding of their cities and temples in Canaan. He brought peace, prosperity and commercial progress to the ancient world of his era. An interesting statement in Josephus is that Cyrus read Isaiah’s prophecy here and was influenced by it to free the Jews (*Antiquities*, XI:1:2). That is not altogether impossible since Cyrus was a man interested in all religions and especially the Jews. Read Cyrus’ proclamation of release of the Jews in Ezra 1:1ff; 2 Chron. 36:22ff. **Three reasons God gives for “using” Cyrus and for predicting it through Isaiah:** (a) Cyrus is to know that the God of Israel is the only real God (45:3); (b) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah for the sake of Israel (45:4); (c) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah in order that **all men** may know Jehovah is the only real God (45:6). Isaiah 45:5-8 is one of the **great passages** teaching the **immanence of God in his creation**. God did not create the universe and leave it like a wound-up clock to run down of itself. He is **active** in it constantly! God is personally and directly involved in this world’s day-by-day operation (see Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:18-32; Rom. 8:28-29; Daniel chs. 7-12; Rev. chs. 4-9). **GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN BOTH WEAL AND WOE! (45:7).** Is God in the whirlwind? Yes! (Nahum 1:3; Zech 9:14). Is God in the earthquake? Yes! (Isa. 29:6; Acts 16:26; Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:12; 8:5). God is in locust plagues, fires, floods, famines, droughts, pestilences—even in wars (Amos 4:6-13). “Does evil befall a city except the Lord hath done it?” (Amos 3:6).

God uses fulfilled prophecy as the main evidence to prove WHO he is (see 44:7,26; 45:4,21,23; 46:10; 48:3,5,6,7,8,15,16). Through FULFILLED PROPHECY God reiterates his omnipotence and omniscience. He is going to do with Cyrus according to his divine righteousness, not out of any goodness on Cyrus’ part. Cyrus is not to be “paid off,” or “bribed” to release the Jews. God will stir up Cyrus’ spirit to do it! Zechariah predicted that God would keep the world at peace so the Jews might rebuild their temple and cities—“not by power nor by might, but by God’s Spirit” (Zech 4:5-14). It is nothing short of God’s omniscience and divine sovereignty that Cyrus would, according to prophecy, free the Hebrew captives without a struggle and by his own

imperial edict. To allow millions of people, who in 70 years had become an integral part of the economic, political and social system of his empire (remember Esther, the Jewess was queen, and Mordecai was prime minister, at one time) to pick up and leave suddenly would cause unimaginable difficulties. Most of the Hebrews **didn't** return to Palestine, but some 50 to 100 thousand did. Note these four things about the Persian release of the Hebrews: (a) it was begun in 536 B.C., exactly 70 years after the first exile in 606 B.C. under Nebuchadnezzar. This was predicted by other prophets of God (Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:2); (b) it was instituted by Cyrus who was predicted 150 years before his birth (Isa. 45:1-13); (c) no ransom money was paid for the Hebrews; no great army marched into Persia to deliver them; they were simply turned loose and even given money by Persia to rebuild in Palestine; (d) not only released, they were told to re-institute their commonwealth—meaning they were to return to self-governing nationhood (Ezra 7:11-26). When Isaiah was making this prophecy of their release the people of Judah had not even been taken captive! That is the point! Isaiah couldn't even convince them they would be exiled from their land—how much more incredulous to them would be this prophecy of their release from exile. Read the book of Jeremiah to get a picture of the Jewish stubborn incredulity about exile. Those prophets who predicted it were considered traitors. God was going to form a **new Israel** by the process of chastening the remnant and delivering them (Isa. 45:14-19). The release of the remnant and restoration of Judah was to be the beginning of that **total** process culminating in the coming Messiah-Servant. The figurative picture of many nations coming to Israel with their treasures is a favorite metaphor of Isaiah to predict the **Messianic age** (Isa. 2:2-5; 18:7; 19:16-25; 23:18; 60:5-22; 61:5-11, etc.). Isaiah's prediction here is that the inveterate enemies of Israel will someday turn over to Israel their "wealth," willingly "surrender" to Israel as servants, and beseech Israel to be allowed to join in the worship of Israel's God. **This is all figurative (apocalyptic) of those who became Christians when Israel produced the Messiah and his kingdom (the NT church). IT CERTAINLY CANNOT BE PREDICTING ISRAEL AND EGYPT TODAY!** The invitation from Jehovah (45:22-25) to the whole world is to "turn" to him and be saved. The redemption of all mankind is God's total goal. So, God supports that goal with his **oath**—"by myself I have sworn." There is nothing higher for God to swear by than himself. God swears on his own eternalness (Heb. 6:13-20; Gen. 22:16; Rom. 14:11): (a) the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ was the greatest, most specific and thoroughly confirmed **oath** of God ever made; (b) it was there, in history, God validated the certainty of all his promises and the faithfulness of his own nature (see 2 Cor. 1:19-21; Heb. 6:17ff); (c) it was there (at the cross and empty tomb) that God "interposed himself" with an oath; God in the flesh, dying and coming to life again by his own power; (d) once for all God proved that he is the resurrection and life; that no one comes to the Father except through the **Son-Servant-Messiah**; (e) with absolute historic certainty God proved there that every word he speaks comes to pass in righteousness; that eventually every knee must bow and every tongue confess that he is God (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10ff).

Bel (Isa. 46:1-7) as the name implies was a "descendant" of *Baal*, the Canaanite god. *Nebo* was *Bel's* "son." The image of *Bel* was gold and 18 ft tall. *Bel* was placed in temples overlaid with gold plate inside and out. Isaiah says: "Impressive as these pagan images are, powerful as their followers say they are, they will be carried

shamefully off by the conquerors of Babylon—*Be!* will be **helpless!** If these images represent real gods, where are they when their images are carried off? **Jehovah-God** is just the opposite. **He** has carried Israel through one trouble after another. He has never been defeated or carried into exile. These pagan images can be fashioned with men's hands, put where men want to put them, they cannot move, and when one cries to an image he gets no answer nor does he get relief! **WHY CAN'T HUMAN BEINGS "SEE" THAT—AND REMEMBER THAT!** God is going to expose Babylon for what she really is—wicked, indulgent, powerless. She is going to be stripped naked by God, without her false luxury and haughtiness. God holds **all** nations morally responsible to know better than what they do! Babylon boasted (47:1-11) she would be mistress of the world forever. She never gave a thought to the warnings of conscience or the lessons of history (as with the Assyrians, Egyptians, *etal.*). One would think the nations of the world today would never forge the lessons of history—but they do! **THOSE WHO RENOUNCE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, OR THOSE WHO HURT GOD'S PEOPLE (HIS CHURCH), ARE SURE TO REAP GOD'S JUDGMENT—THIS IS AN UNDENIABLE LESSON OF HISTORY!** Babylon was a lover of **pleasure** (the Hebrew word is *aediyah* and is the word from which we get "Eden." Babylon thought she would build Paradise on earth, without Jehovah-God. Babylon trusted in its wickedness. There is a false sense of power and autonomy that comes from rebellion and sin against God. That is what the devil promised Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—"you will be as gods." Ruin was to come upon Babylon **suddenly**—and it did come, **in one night** (see Daniel, ch. 5). It was complete unexpected. The Lord-Jehovah challenges Babylon to call upon the full force of its massive and complex system of sorcery, astrology and magic to save it (its gods). Though Babylon built its whole culture on this **foolishness**, and though even its emperors became exasperated at the sham of it all (Dan. 2:1-12), she still practiced it rather than search for the living God! None of the elaborate system of "gods" will save Babylon. She will fall suddenly and terribly. Isaiah 47 is much like Revelation 17-18—both are describing the unexpected, but certain fall of great empires (Babylon and Rome).

God puts the **onus** squarely on the perversity of Judah's people. They have had many, many opportunities to know all the past predictions of their prophets and their fulfillment. They had better study them again. They knew but wouldn't admit they knew. Unbelief is moral not intellectual (Isa. 48:1-8). Now the Lord predicts **new things!** These will be things they have never heard, nor has it entered into their mind, because they are things that **must be revealed** to be known! Salvation by God's grace through a Suffering-Servant-Messiah atoning for all men's sins was a **new thing**. God was telling them through Isaiah. The reason God hid these "new things" until he was ready to reveal them was: (a) the OT people were spiritually unprepared to hear them; (b) they must yet be put through a period of "indignation" (exile and the following centuries of "trouble"); (c) until God's people are so oppressed they are ready to quit their presumptiveness and rebellion, they are not ready for his **new thing** (the Messiah)—but God was even then predicting the Messiah; (e) if the Messiah had come in Isaiah's time they would have dealt *very treacherously* with redemption. What God was going to do (both in those days and in the days of the new-thing-Messiah-age) he would do because of his goodness and faithfulness, not because of theirs! **THEY MUST GET THIS PERSPECTIVE RIGHT!** The Hebrew word *'ekhetam* means, "muzzle" and is translated

“delay” NIV and “defer” in 48:9. God literally mizzles himself because of his own graciousness, not their goodness. He could have rightfully destroyed them utterly. Then the Lord said he had (and would yet) submit them “to the furnace of affliction” or “furnace of refining” (48:10) **for God’s own sake!** Their whole history had been one of “refining through affliction.” THIS ALSO MUST BE THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR PAST AND THEIR FUTURE! It is not easy for the believer to comprehend how God allows his “chosen” to be put “in the furnace of affliction” **for the sake of the name of God!** God is not being sadistic—he is loving Judah (and us) by chastening us as “children” (48:11; see Rom. 8:18-39; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 12:1-10; Heb. 12:1-17, etc.). But the believer must trust the inviolability of the name of Jehovah-God, the sovereignty of his will and action and accept it, for there is no other basis for man’s salvation. God uses this phrase, “for my own sake” numerous times in Ezekiel chs. 20-21 describing his chastening exile upon Judah (read it).

Chapter 48 is a summation of the section (44-48) discussing the **power** of the Lord’s **Servant-Messiah**. The **power** of God is going to be demonstrated through his “anointed-type,” Cyrus, and through his **anointed Servant-Messiah**—the fulfillment of that type. God is going to demonstrate his **power** so his name may be vindicated as **Absolute-Sovereign**. This is necessary that once and for all men may realize there are no other “gods.” The intent of all this is that Judah might “see” things from God’s perspective. Human beings must understand what “is” from the perspective of the **ONE** who made what “is”—that is, “see” things as God “sees” them. And, so, God sent “Me,” “his Spirit.” Who is “Me”? It is the Messiah! **This whole section is ultimately about the Messiah.** The “new thing” can only be the Messianic age. Chapter 49 is unquestioningly about the Messiah. This section emphasizes the unique companionship of the Holy Spirit and the Messiah (see also Isa. 42:1ff; 61:1ff). The **Suffering-Servant** did not come only as a man—he was the Spirit of God in the flesh (John 14:15-17; Col. 1:19; 2:9). This **MESSIAH who is also the HOLY SPIRIT** will **show** things from God’s perspective as never before or afterward! He won’t just tell about God’s perspective, HE WILL BE GOD’S PERSPECTIVE AND DO GOD’S PERSPECTIVE, BECAUSE HE WILL BE GOD!

God made every effort, from Abraham to Isaiah, to lead this people in the only way **profitable** for them. The way of the Lord is in his commandments: (a) it is the “ancient” way wherein is goodness and rest (Jer. 6:16); (b) but Israel and Judah refused God’s way and chose “bypaths” and “stumbled” (Jer. 18;15-17; Isa. 30:8-11). **God’s “way” is always profitable, and that has been proven by historical experience (see the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs and Psalms and Job).** If Israel (Judah) had only walked in God’s way what could she have done to redeem the Gentile world around her when God brought the Messiah to the world through her? IT WOULD HAVE “PROFITED” THE WHOLE WORLD! Fleshly Israel’s disobedience has been a great hindrance to the truth of God throughout the world to this day!

The “wayfarer” (wicked”) is not forced to take God’s “way.” He is exhorted to take God’s way by the free choice of his own will (48:17-19). First, he is to “flee” Babylon (that is, to “flee” the **ways** of Babylon). Second, he is to “declare” Jehovah’s redemption. While these commands apply *initially* to the Jews in their Babylonian captivity, they anticipate

more than the physical “fleeing” of Babylon (because, once they are in captivity, they can’t physically flee Babylon until the Persian, Cyrus, lets them return to their homeland). It is a command to **holiness**; a command for Israel to separate herself from the wickedness and idolatry of Babylon. The **true** meaning of this finds its **fulfillment** in the exhortation to the New, True, Israel (the NT church) to feel the paganism of Rome (cf. Rev. 18:4-5) and not partake of her sins. Israel need not fear breaking all ties with Babylon and returning to its Messianic destiny. God will keep his promises to sustain her. He did when he sustained them in escape from Egypt! **There is no peace to the wicked!** (a) wickedness is the Hebrew word *resha’iyim* and means those who are “disquieted, tossed, restless, disturbed;” (b) it is describing those whose inward moral nature is without firmness—and therefore, in a state of moral confusion; (c) Paul says cunning and deceitful men would like to bring wickedness into the Ephesian church and cause it to be “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:11-16); (d) many people do not understand that doctrinal vacillation leads to moral confusion (1 Cor. 15:33-34)—“evil *homilia* (Greek for preaching, teaching) corrupts good morals.” And this is the precise point of this passage in Isaiah. Judah must walk in the commandments of Jehovah if she is to have peace and rest for her soul.

ISAIAH 49:1—51:23

Introduction

The **Messiah-Servant** was predicted to be “**Teacher.**” Joel 2:23 could be translated...”for he has given the Teacher for your justification.” Moses prophesied God would raise up a **Prophet** (Deut. 18;15-16 and Acts 3:22). Isaiah 30:20; 49:4-11; 54:13 all portray the Messiah as the **Teacher** sent from God. Jesus even applied Isaiah 54:13 directly to himself in John 6:54. The **Teacher** was God himself in the flesh, on earth, teaching men his will. Malachi refers to the Messiah as “the messenger of the covenant”—even the Lord himself (Mal. 3:1-2).

In the NT, although we see Jesus as a preacher and minister, we see him pre-eminently as **The Teacher (or “Rabbi”)**. His “Sermon” on the Mount was matchless teaching. He opened his mouth and “taught” (Matt. 5:2). The titles “teacher”, “master,” “rabbi” all indicate the most prominent function of his active ministry. Even at the age of 12 years he revealed his wisdom and mission as **The Teacher** in the midst of the rabbis or Jewish teachers of the Law in the temple (Lk. 2:41:ff). In the power of the Holy Spirit he taught so that all recognized his authority (Lk. 4:14-15; Matt. 7:29; John 7:46, etc.). He explained to the disciples in private what he taught the people in public (Matt. 13:36). His principles and methods of teaching constitute the standard by which all true pedagogy is measured, and the ideal toward which all subsequent teachers have toiled with only partial success (Matt. 7:28-29; John 1:49; 3:2; 6:46). In his Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) we have the work of Christianity presented in educational (“teaching”) terms.

To bring deliverance from the bondage of sin, Jesus *taught* people about the atoning work of redemption in his death. To produce personal moral and spiritual growth which would result in joy and happiness, Jesus *taught* people the commandments of God’s will for human life. To bring people to belief, Jesus *taught* men his deity. To give people security and peace, Jesus taught men his sovereignty and Lordship.

Teaching! Jesus was always “teaching”—by word or by deed, he was always leading, directing, pointing, teaching men concerning God. He was the greatest of all teachers because of WHO he was and WHAT he taught.

A Colorado study asked 3000 high school seniors about their best teachers and received this composite: He (1) is genuinely concerned and interested in students as individuals; (2) expects students to work to learn; (3) is impartial in dealing with students and their work and their grades; (4) is obviously enthusiastic about teaching. **This fits the Lord Jesus to a “T.”** Ironically, it was when Jesus was claiming to be **The Teacher** predicted by Isaiah, and was teaching them about the Bread of Life, that so many followers left him and followed him no more (John 6). They were more interested in

being fed bread and fish for their stomachs than they were in being taught the Bread of Life for their souls. MAKE YOUR PRIORITY THAT OF LISTENING TO **THE TEACHER** THROUGH HIS PRECIOUS **WORD**.

WHO besides the **Messiah-Servant** could be speaking in these verses? IT IS SURELY THE MESSIAH-SERVANT! (a) he is called from the “womb”; (b) he is named while still in the womb; (c) his mouth is a “sharp sword”; (d) he is hid in the shadow of Jehovah’s hand; (e) he is called “Israel” or Prince of God; (f) Jehovah is to be glorified in him; (g) he is to bring “Jacob” back to Jehovah; (h) he is honorable in the eyes of Jehovah; (i) he is to be a light to the Gentiles; (j) he is Jehovah’s salvation to the end of the earth; (k) he is to be a “covenant” to the peoples; (l) he is to release “prisoners” etc., etc. From this point on in Isaiah, Babylon and Cyrus are not mentioned directly. From this point on the **Messiah-Servant** and the glory of his future kingdom will be pre-eminent. **The Servant** calls himself God’s “polished arrow” and his words are a “sharp sword.” **The Servant** is kept in Jehovah’s quiver until God is ready to “shoot” him into the world in God’s warfare against Satan. It is interesting that one of the Hebrew words meaning **teach** is literally from a root word meaning, “shoot an arrow” or “throw a spear.” TEACHING IS WARFARE—IT IS A BATTLE FOR THE MIND OF MANKIND! **The Messiah-Servant** is also called to be anointed as the Prince of God (i.e., “Israel”). Jesus was descended from David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:1-6) and promised the throne of his Heavenly Father also—he is the Prince of all princes (see Isa. 9:6; Dan. 9:24-27; Lk. 1:30-35). Isaiah 49:4 is one of the most unique verses in the Bible. It predicts a point in **The Servant-Messiah’s (Jesus’s)** ministry when he will cry out in frustration and disappointment. Jesus partook of the same nature as all mankind (Heb. 2:10-28) and was tested in all points as mankind is tested, yet without sinning (Heb. 4:14-16). Edward J. Young says: “The expression of discouragement is no thought of unbelief, but simply of a genuine modesty borne from a consciousness of one’s own weakness.” Jesus acknowledged the weakness of his fleshly-body and nature. Part of Jesus’s incarnate weakness was the frustration and disappointment human beings know when they love other human beings, want to lead them to God’s grace, and have to watch them refuse (read these passages—Matt. 19:16-22; 23:37-39; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 19:41-44; John 12:27-36; Matt. 26:36-46; John 6:60-71). Jesus was even angered at the display of unbelief of the Pharisees (Mark 3:5). Did Jesus experience agony? Yes! He had to cry out to God in prayer (Heb. 5:7-9). Jesus (a) was astonished at the unbelief of his countrymen (Mark 6:6); (b) wept at the grief of Mary and Martha (Jn. 11:35); (c) even despaired of finding faith on the earth at his 2nd coming (Luke 18:8); (d) was sad to have to let the rich young ruler turn away (Mark 10:21ff); (e) was exasperated with the unbelief of his own disciples a number of times (e.g., Luke 24:25-27). Please note, however, that the **Messiah-Servant** overcame these predicted emotional lows by committing his right (vindication) to the Lord (last half of Isa. 49:4).

“Zion” (faithful covenant-keeping believers—Jews in the OT) (49:14-21) is represented as being in a state of deep despondency. This is anticipating the nation of Judah (the “remnant”) in exile (see Psa. 137:1ff)—weeping as they remember “Zion” (the “fortress” or city of God). The promises of the prophets were glorious. But history taught that nations taken captive disappeared or lost their national identity. Judah was certain that Jehovah had forsaken her (see Lamentations 5:1ff). Even as great a hero of the faith

as Daniel agonized over being exiled (see Daniel's prayer in Dan. ch. 9). Many were sure they would never see Canaan again! Jeremiah is not called "the weeping prophet" for nothing! But the Lord's love for "Zion" is indestructible! On rare occasions one learns of a mother deserting her new-born child (but not usually). God, to the contrary, **cannot** forget his child—it is not his nature at all to forget his promises or his children. They may forget him, but he will **never** forget them. He has etched Zion on the palms of his hands—carved into his hands is Zion. Zion is **constantly** in his mind, like the precious wife of a husband, or a precious son or daughter. True Zion (people faithful to God's covenant—God's "church" in both OT and NT) is a kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:22-28) even if the world disappears. Isaiah's audience is to read his prophecy and look and see that what God has promised about Zion is already beginning to happen and overcome their melancholia. Jehovah swears by his own eternal life that Zion shall one day appear as a bride with all her wedding finery on (Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 12:1; 19:7-8; 21:2).

They heard Isaiah keep on saying God was going to call the Gentiles into covenant relationship—they could not understand how the Gentiles from all over the world could take up residence in "Zion." Zion's melancholia would eventually turn to **marveling**. Isaiah is predicting here a "spiritual" land (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 12:22ff) because Zion's literal land (Palestine) has **never been too small** for the Jews. She has never thought she had too many literal, physical children. There were times, after the establishment of the NT church, when some of the Jewish Christians (even Peter) wondered about the amazing and rapid growth of the New Zion (the church of Christ). Many were wondering how God could make room in "Zion" for all the Gentiles. There has never been a time when the enemies of the Jews were literally "far away." Their enemies have always been near and have always been physically trying to swallow them up (Samaritans, Seleucids, Romans, Muhammadans, Turks, English, Germans, Russians, *etal.*). So this definitely points in its **ultimate fulfillment to the Messianic age (the church)**. The remainder of this chapter confirms it. All these promises of God through the prophets that the covenant people would some day be "as the sands of the sea shore" were incredulous in light of the fact that they were taken into exile. And even when they returned in 536 B.C. they continued to be a small nation. They ask, "whence have these come?" 49:21. God's answer is "I will raise My signal to the peoples...Kings shall be your foster fathers..." etc. 49:22-23. The "**ensign**" is a favorite metaphor for the **Messiah** (Isa. 11:2; 18:3; 62:10). Kings and queens of the *goyim* (i.e., "nations, Gentiles) will one day become, as it were, parents or supporters of Zion! Jesus's coming (first coming) was the "**signal**." He himself said: "Other sheep I have, not of this (Jewish) fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed My voice" (Jn. 10:16). Then he said: "Go and make disciples of **all the nations**..." Matt. 28:18.

Who divorced whom? Judah is trying to justify herself against the Lord's accusations with some accusations of her own! Judah is accusing the Lord of casting her off "illegally" (divorcing her) without justification. God answers by referring them to his Law, his will—his nature. It is not his nature to do anything without justifiable cause. He is just, fair, righteous. In the matter of divorce, for example, if there is legal cause for a man to put away his wife, he must certify the legality of it by a written bill of divorcement (Deut. 24:1ff). God has given no written bill of divorcement to Judah. Judah is

separated from him by her own doing—not his! She has gone after other lovers (see Hosea chs. 1-3). Neither did God give Judah up as something he owed to Babylon. Babylon has no claim on God. He owes Babylon nothing. God owes no one anything! Judah goes away to slavery because of her own choice—not God’s she wanted what Babylon had—she coveted it, she desired it. Judah accuses God of insensitivity for casting her off. The actual facts are quite different—it is Judah who has been insensitive in spurning God’s love and care. Time and time again God announced to Judah he wanted to save her but no one stepped forward to answer his call! He sent prophets but they were scorned and rejected (30:8-11). Even when God himself came in his Incarnate Son, they killed him. God has the power and the willingness, but they will not respond.

The Hebrew word *limmudiyn* (“them that are taught” RSV) could be translated “them that are discipled.” It is the same word as in Isa. 8:16. It is the root word from which the later Hebrew word *Talmud* (i.e., “instruction”) was derived. Jehovah will equip the **Servant-Messiah (Jesus)** with divine wisdom and instruction. The obedient character of the **Messiah-Servant** is being emphasized. **He will hear** the commandment of Jehovah and do it (see Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 8:29; 14:31; 15:10; Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:8; 10:9), as compared with Israel, God’s “servant-in-type,” who had the word of God taught them by the prophets and did **not** hear and obey! The **Servant-Messiah’s** primary mission was to come as **The Teacher** (Isa. 30:20; 54:13; John 6:54). The **Servant-Messiah** never takes a day off from obeying the Father. “Morning by morning he wakens his ear to hear.” It was his mission, his destiny, his life’s work, to obey the Father (John 23:27; Heb. 10:5ff). It was his mission to teach mankind what obedience to the Father involved and produced. There was not the slightest rebellion in the **Servant-Messiah**. He was tempted and tested—supremely—but he did not yield. Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah and a host of other servants objected and some even tried to resist the Lord’s call. But the **Servant-Messiah** did not turn back from serving Jehovah for one moment. The **Servant-Messiah** submitted to the most degrading and shameful humiliation without resentment. The power of the **Servant-Messiah** to render such unreserved obedience to Jehovah is his unreserved faith and trust in Jehovah. He had no powers that any other human being possesses in the matter of trusting the Father—it was simply FAITH. He trusted completely in the Father that whatever he had to suffer as the **Servant-Messiah**, the Father would vindicate and make right. The **Servant-Messiah**, therefore, sets his face hard as a **diamond** to do Jehovah’s will (Heb. word *hallamiys* “flint” might be translated, “diamond.” The cause of the **Servant-Messiah’s** enemies was “as full of holes as a garment eaten by moths.” They were consumed; the **Servant-Messiah** lives forever!

Chapter 51 is a special message to that small remnant of true believers contemporary with Isaiah (those who “seek Jehovah” and “seek after or pursue righteousness”). Even the remnant was sorely tempted to give up all hope. They must be encouraged. To the tiny remnant of Isaiah’s disciples (Isa. 8:16) it might appear **impossible** that Jehovah’s rule of justice would ever be established! JEHOVAH IS ABLE TO DO THE **IMPOSSIBLE!** Could Jehovah produce a powerful rich nation from an old man and old woman no longer able to bear children? YES! Abraham and Sarah. Through the one “**Seed**” of Abraham (Jesus of Nazareth), God will produce a **new Israel** which will

submit to his rule of justice and righteousness (Gal. 3:15-29; 6:15-16). Isaiah's "remnant" must believe even though they may not receive what is promised they must "see" it and "greet" it from "afar" (Heb. 11:13-16). **They must "look to the rock from which they were hewn"—Abraham and Sarah.** Jehovah will comfort Zion through a *torah* rule of "law." This is not necessarily the law of Moses (though it includes it in principle) because no man could be justified by that law—this is the "law" of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:17). It is the "law" of faith given to all nations (Rom. 16:26). It is the same "law" as predicted in Isaiah 2:1-4. It is the "law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). It is the "law of God" as fulfilled by and through the **Servant-Messiah**, the will of God in grace. The phrase, "arm of the Lord" is a Messianic metaphor (Isa. 40:10; 52:10; 53:1). It symbolized the "power" of God extended into the world through the Messiah.

What seems as if it will go on and on, unalterably fixed and sure (i.e., the heavens and the earth) will one day vanish. Even the perpetuity of the human race which **seems** assured will also one day expire totally. But that which is saved by Jehovah will endure forever. Whatever is declared right by Jehovah is eternal because that is truth. Anything declared not right by Jehovah will perish because that is falsehood. How are people to know what Jehovah has declared right and wrong? **BY HEARKENING UNTO JEHOVAH'S LAW—HIS REVEALED WORD!** Jehovah's law is not just in writing, it must be assimilated into the nature, character, personality of human beings—it must be believed and obeyed—it must be "written on the heart"—EVEN IN O.T. TIMES! It is the law of faith which Abraham had on his heart and by which he was justified before God (Rom. 4:1-25; Gen. 15:6). It is the same law which was on the hearts of many OT saints—the law of faith (Heb. 11:1-40). It is the will of God that salvation would come through an atoning Savior—written on the hearts of some even before Christ came (John 8:56; 12:41; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). It is the "covenant" and "law" Jeremiah said would be written on men's hearts (Jer. 31:31-34). We believe this applies to the remnant of Isaiah's day. God's law was "**on their hearts**" or they would not have believed Isaiah! (See Psa. 37:31; 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11).

Zion is to be alert to what God is teaching her through the coming captivity. "Zion" is the believing remnant whose descendants will one day produce the Messiah and his church (Heb. 12:22ff). Even the believing remnant will have to drink the cup of God's "indignant" wrath in the captivity (just like the believers had to suffer the "tribulations" of the Roman empire in the 1st century A.D.—see the book of Revelation). See also Jer. 25:15-29; Ezek. 23:31-35. Zion is to learn something from this "cup of staggering." She is to learn that only Jehovah can deliver her from the fix into which she has gotten herself by choosing idolatry. None of Jerusalem's wise old men or bright young men had the capability or the desire (see Isa. 3:6-12; 4:1) to save her, if it meant they must get involved and put their life on the line. All the sons of Jerusalem were as helpless as the antelope caught in the hunter's net. The men Jerusalem expected to be leaders and deliverers will become victims like everyone else (read 2 Kings). **Jerusalem must throw herself, in faith, upon the mercy of God! That is what she is to learn from the captivity ("cup of staggering").** On account of Zion's inability to save herself, Jehovah will have her case plead. He will be both mediator and judge. Zion's case will be mediated! Jehovah will discontinue her "staggering" and give her cup to her

enemies. This may have an *initial* reference to the release from captivity, **ut its ultimate goal (fulfillment) must be the Messianic mediation and atonement.** God certainly did not *literally* take away Jerusalem's "cup of staggering" with the return from the exile. Daniel predicted 100 years after Isaiah that Jerusalem would see "trouble" for 490 years from the time of her release from exile (Dan. 9:24-27). Jerusalem suffered severe "staggering" for every century since the return from exile. In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was completely destroyed! The promise us ultimately to Zion, the true Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is pre-eminent (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22ff), the church of Christ. That Zion, **the church**, shall never suffer being cut off from access to God (as the Jews were in exile). N.T. Zion's sacrifice (the Lamb of God—Jesus) would be forever efficacious. NT Zion's sanctuary is eternal because it is in heaven. NT Zion's high priest (Jesus) is forever interceding for her. NT Zion's "feast" of Passover is continual (1 Cor. 5). The "cup of staggering" is put into the hand of "Babylon" (humanism opposed to God) and it shall reel and fall under the wrath of God (Rev. 16:19; 17:6; 18:4-8). God will accomplish all this through the **Suffering-Servant-Messiah** and for the **new Zion**. Thus we approach the climactic chapter of Isaiah's entire work—**chapter 53**—but first the transition chapter (ch. 52). Chapter 52 serves as the transition from generalities concerning the **Servant-Messiah** to particulars which are detailed in ch. 52:13—53:12.

ISAIAH 52:1—53:12

Introduction

A man named David Thomas once wrote, “Repudiate and denounce with all the energy of your being that Christ reconciles God to the world. But proclaim all the tones that can melt the heart, that his great mission to the world was to reconcile hostile humanity to himself.”

That is a very subtle half-truth. It is true that Christ’s mission was partly to reconcile hostile humanity to himself. But it is also true that Christ died to appease the wrath of God upon sin and thus Christ’s death reconciles God to the world! Liberal theologians speak with horror at the idea of an “alienated” or “angry” God. But both the OT and the NT clearly speak of the wrath of God. Even the “natural order” (i.e., creation) itself bear witness to the “wrath of God” upon this present world order (e.g. Rom. 1:18ff; Rom. 8:18ff). Our text in Isaiah 53:4,10 says the **Suffering Servant** is to be “smitten by God” and that it was “the will of the Lord to bruise him.”

The late J. Gresham Machen said in his book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 132, “...the modern objection to the doctrine of the atonement on the ground that doctrine is contrary to the love of God, is based upon the most abysmal misunderstanding of the doctrine itself. The modern liberal teachers persist in speaking of the sacrifice of Christ as though it were a sacrifice made by some one other than God. They speak of it as though it meant that God waits coldly until a price is paid to him before he forgives sin. As a matter of fact, it means nothing of the kind; the objection ignores that which is absolutely fundamental in the Christian doctrine of the Cross. The fundamental thing is that God himself, and not another, makes the sacrifice for sin—God himself in the person of the Son who assumed our nature and died for us, God himself in the Person of the Father who spared not his own Son but offered him up for us all...Such love is very different from the complacency found in the god of modern preaching; this love is love that did not count the cost; it is love that is love indeed.”

God was not pleased (or appeased) with animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1ff). God could not be appeased with any religious deeds of sinful mankind. So “a body was prepared” for the **Suffering Servant-Messiah** and he came and was “made to be sin our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). God treated the sinless Christ as if he were guilty, and inflicted upon him the divine justice (punishment) which our sins deserved; and this inflicted justice or punishment made it possible for god to treat the sinful as they were actually righteous. In the death of Christ God satisfied by his absolute justice and his absolute mercifulness (Rom. 3:21-25). CHRIST **DID RECONCILE GOD TO THE WORLD!** And in giving such divine grace and love to the world, Christ offers the motivation that reconciles believing human beings to God and to their fellow human beings.

Andree Seu, editorializing in *World* magazine on 9/11 and the “Twin Towers” attack by Islamic terrorists in airplanes Special Issue, September/October 2002, pg. 63, wrote, “Jeremiah lived at a time of gross idolatry, apostasy, adulter, decadence, treachery, and injustice; that is, a time like our own. It’s possible, of course, that God doesn’t send down fire and brimstone and 757 shrapnel anymore on the reprobate, but Francis Schaeffer didn’t buy it: ‘Man is justly under the wrath of God...and if the justice of that wrath is obvious concerning any generation, it is our own. There is only one perspective we can have of the post-Christian world of our generation: an understanding that our culture and our country is under the wrath of God.’”—quoted from *Death in the City*, a book by Francis Schaeffer comparing the times of Jeremiah the OT prophet with American society in the 20th century. You ought to read Francis Schaeffer’s *Death in the City*!!!

As before, Isaiah is speaking of the future Babylonian exile in the “predictive-present.” He is directing the exhortation to his small band of disciples (i.e., the faithful remnant which shall form the nucleus of “Zion”). This remnant must prepare itself for imminent exile into pagan Babylon. It must strengthen itself by believing what Isaiah is predicting about its **Messiah** and its **messianic role**. “Zion” (the faithful remnant, or “church” of the OT) must commit itself to an **adornment of holiness** so that when it is taken captive it will be able to keep itself separated from the filth and enslavement of heathenism with which it will surrounded and allured. Zion must not allow the fleeting pleasures of Babylonian ungodliness lure her from her “throne” (i.e., her royal messianic queen-ship). Zion must clothe herself in the “white robes of righteousness.” The aim of this passage is spiritual Jerusalem (the “true Jews” Rom. 2:28-29). This is evident from the prediction that the uncircumcised and the unclean would no more come into Zion! It cannot be literally or physically intended. Jerusalem has suffered literal invasion and occupation by one circumcised culture after another to this very day in the 21st century! Those not in covenant relationship to God through obedience to Christ’s gospel (the “uncircumcised” in heart) and those not purified from sin by the atoning blood of the **Suffering-Servant-Messiah** (the unclean) will not come into the **ultimate “Zion.”** Those without the “wedding garment” (Christ’s imputed righteousness by grace through faith) provided by the King (Jesus) will not be allowed to partake of the feast of the King (Matt. 22:1-14). This was true for the Jews in Isaiah’s day as well as for all people today—they must believe in God’s **Messiah** and obey whatever dispensation of God’s grace under which they lived. It is interesting to remember that Joel predicts, in his messianic conclusion, that “strangers shall never again pass through” Jerusalem (Joel 3:17)—and Ezekiel, in his portrayal of the glorious messianic era to come, predicts that “aliens” will be given an “inheritance” and be as “native born sons” (Ezek. 47:21-23). It is apparent, therefore, that when the Messianic kingdom (the church) came, people were to become citizens of that kingdom, not as a result of being born a Jew and circumcised in the flesh, but by being reconciled to the Messiah of God through faith. All who are not thus reconciled are “strangers” and “uncircumcised and unclean” and cannot enter **spiritual Jerusalem** (in Isaiah’s day or today). That is precisely what the NT teachers (Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-25; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 3:1—5:25; Gal. 6:12-16; Eph. 2:11-22; Phil. 3:2-11; Heb. 12:18-19). God promises to physically deliver OT “Zion” from her captors (the Babylonians), but “spiritual Zion” must make the choices and do the deeds of holiness that separates her from Babylonian wickedness. Isa. 52:1-2 are saturated with

imperatives (commands)—“**Awake; put on; Shake; arise; sit; loose**” all are commands for Zion to act. This is what distinguishes “spiritual Zion” from genetic Israel—holiness by choice.

Apparently we have in this prediction of Isaiah (52:7-12) an instance of “Shortened Perspective.” That is, the prophet is predicting through Isaiah ca. 700 B.C. the deliverance of Judah from Babylonian captivity (536 B.C.) and, 700 years later in Christ, the deliverance of all mankind from sin through the Messiah without mentioning all the history of the scheme of redemption that transpires between the two historical events. Joel 2:27-28 is a classic example of “Shortened Perspective.” There is no doubt that the **ultimate fulfillment** of Isaiah’s prediction was to find itself fulfilled in the Messiah and his gospel (Rom. 10:15). Isaiah’s context indicates he is predicting what is going to eventuate with the coming of **The Suffering-Servant-Messiah**. Of course, the messengers of the good news that Judah is to be released from captivity and restored to her physical commonwealth in Palestine by the decree of Cyrus will be “lovely” to behold. The lesson from this miraculous deliverance will be that God rules in the affairs of all humanity to fulfill his sovereign will. There will be “peace” for a while for Judah. But surely there is more good news involved in this prophecy than a physical deliverance and a physical peace. The physical deliverance of Judah was the first step in a long series of historical events which were to lead to the coming of the Messiah and the true deliverance, the spiritual salvation and peace between God and mankind (see Dan. 9:24-27 for the timetable of historical events between). Ultimately, then, “him that bringeth good tidings” is the **Messiah**. Christ, **The Suffering-Servant**” is also **The Messenger** (cf. Isa. 61:1-2; Lk. 4:16-30; Malachi 3:1-4). The messenger who “prepares the way before” in Malachi 3:1 is unquestionably, John the Baptist. But the “Lord whom you seek...the messenger of the covenant...” of Malachi 3:1 is the Messiah.

In Romans 10:14-21 we find the **ultimate fulfillment** of Isaiah’s prediction. There the apostle Paul emphasizes the prophecies of Isaiah about the Lord’s salvation were **not** fulfilled in a rebellious, physical Israel. This Isaiah speaks of is to be “seen by all the ends of the earth.” Surely there is more to God’s “salvation and comfort” (Isa. 40:1ff) than a mere temporary deliverance of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. Surely there is more to God’s reign than a Jewish nation only superficially submitted to him in the restored commonwealth under Ezra and Zerubbabel. The post-exilic prophets make it very plain (Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi) that the returned exiles **soon** fell back into their old rebellions against the law of Moses and the rule of God. The salvation, peace and rule of God announced by Isaiah’s “beautiful” bearer of “good tidings” is made accessible to all mankind through him who came and “preached peace” to those “far off” and those “near” (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). Thus there is **The Messenger—Jesus Christ** who accomplished the “good tidings” and there are human messengers, plural, (apostles, pastors, evangelists, teachers) of the gospel of Christ who also “bear good tidings” to the world.

Chapter and verse numeration (which came many centuries after the original documents were written) obscures the contextual flow of our present passage (52:13—53:12 should be read as one unit). Making 52:15 the end of a chapter and 53:1 the beginning of another is an unfortunate adumbration which the student of Isaiah’s

message must be careful to trace out. These verses are all one dissertation on the **success of the Suffering-Servant-Messiah**. The Hebrew word *yasekkiyl* is the infinitive of *sakal* and may be translated “to prosper—to have success, (as in RSV)” instead of “act wisely (as in NIV).” “Prosper” fits the context. The affirmation of Jehovah is that his **Servant** shall succeed or “prosper” in fulfilling all the predictions made (through Isaiah) of ultimate deliverance, redemption and glorification of Zion. The **Servant-Messenger-Messiah** of Jehovah will be exalted to the highest degree. The mighty Jehovah is going to bare his holy “arm” (power) before all the world (52:10). Contrary to God’s apparent default on his covenant promises to the patriarchs by allowing the Babylonian captivity, the Lord is going to send his **Servant** and he will “prosper” in re-establishing Zion in divine power and splendor. It is necessary here, 700 years prior to the **Servant’s** appearance to affirm the “prosperity” of the **Servant** because the Servant’s appearance in history will initially be in such a low, humble, unspectacular, humiliating advent (born in a manger, etc.), most of the world will not believe. But he will be a manifestation of the **powerful “arm”** of Jehovah (53:1). His “prosperity” (the NT church) will be *extraordinary*. Three Hebrew verbs (*toom*—exalted; *nissa*—lifted up; *gavah*—very high) are piled one upon another to emphasize that the Servant will not be defeated in the extreme suffering he must undergo (including death). Isaiah 52:14 and 52:15 are antithetical to one another. They are a contrast between what the Servant first appeared to be and what he later was acknowledged to be. “Many were astonished at him” (the **Servant-Messiah**—not Israel). People would be shocked at his humble demeanor. He claimed to be the “king of the Jews—the Messiah” but he did not in any way fulfill human presuppositions as to Messianic royalty. He was slandered, mocked, accused of blasphemy, arrested, unjustly tried and sentenced as a criminal. He was scourged with a Roman whip and physically mutilated more than most human beings ever suffer, placed on a bloody Roman cross and there tortured by physically and psychologically by mocking rabbis, soldiers, and the multitudes. Some were shocked at his extreme disfigurement (Lk. 23:47-49). **But the fact of his absolute innocence contrasted with his willing acceptance of the atonement for the sin of the world was what made his “visage..so marred more than any man...”** Philippians 2:5-11 expresses it perfectly. Humanity will be shocked at his humiliation. But the *goyim* (“nations—Gentiles”) will be **startled** 52:15—(not “sprinkled” as in KJV and NIV) at the totally unexpected development of events surrounding his humiliation and exaltation will **ultimately** take. The consequences of his redemptive work will be world-wide. A church will be born; his disciples will be found even in the household of Caesar. The like of what shall result from humiliation and exaltation of Jehovah’s **Servant-Messiah** was never imagined by the great (kings, philosophers, theologians). Never was anyone brought so low; never was anyone raised so high as **God’s Servant**. Emperors, philosophers, rabbis will be awed by his glory. “A great company of the Jewish priests will become obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Through the **Servant-Messiah** will come a revelation from God (justification, redemption, sanctification) of things they could never know before his coming—but when he comes they will believe and appropriate and experience (1 Cor. 2:9). Isaiah 52:13-15 is written in the predictive present. It is prophecy, but it is so certain to come to pass it can be written as if it had already happened or was then happening. It is almost as we were listening to two disciples of Jesus standing on a street-corner in Jerusalem reviewing the things that happened on Good Friday, in the light of Easter Sunday and the Day of Pentecost. Isaiah’s account is so vivid and was fulfilled so minutely it is little wonder that many of

the fathers of the church days of old claim that the account reads as though Isaiah had sat at the foot of the cross.

Chapter 53 is still in the *predictive present tense*. It is as if the Servant has come, been rejected, slaughtered and the people of Israel are look at it all in retrospect! The overall reaction of the nation to Jesus's claims to be the Messiah was scoffing, mockery, rejection and persecution. He gained a few disciples, but at the arrest in Gethsemane, they all forsook him and fled (Mark 14:50)). The nation, as a whole, could not believe that Jehovah-God was at work revealing his "Arm" in the itinerant Galilean carpenter's son. It was especially difficult for any who had been attracted to him during his life to believe that he was God's **Servant-Messiah** when they gathered at Golgotha and saw his humiliating death (Lk. 23:13-27). The Jewish mind-set, with a few exceptions, refused to accept the idea that Almighty God could come to earth in a fleshly body. Jesus's claims to be God-Incarnate is what caused the Jews to accuse him of blasphemy and eventually have him crucified. Most Jews to this day will not accept the doctrine and the historical fact of the **Incarnation of God** in Jesus Christ of Nazareth—or in any other human being. **For that matter, many "Gentiles" today refuse to accept Jesus as the Incarnation of Almighty God!** The believing, penitent Jews, after their baptism (Acts 2:38, etc.) still marveled that they could have been so unbelieving. They are represented here by Isaiah as continually marveling as they reflect on their blindness. Twice in the NT this very verse of Isaiah's prophecy is quoted as Jesus (John 12:38) and Paul (Rom. 10:16) express shock that the Jews did not believe when Jehovah's **Servant** came to them.

The **Servant-Messiah's** entry into this world was so inglorious; born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) a "village." Born of poor parentage, in a stable. When he grew up as a lad in Nazareth he was just like any other lad according to all outward appearances (Lk. 2:51-52)—with the one exception of confounding the scholars at Jerusalem Lk. 2:41-50). He was born a Jew, despised and oppressed people for centuries. Nazareth, his boy-hood home had a bad reputation (John 1:46). Among all ancient peoples (even as among some modern advertisers) ideal physique, refined facial features, etc., were considered necessary prerequisites of future greatness, along with "the right parents," "the right birthplace," "the right schools," etc. These verses are not intended to describe Christ's facial features or his physique. They are simply predicting that men would judge him by that inauspicious human appearance and completely reject him because of their presuppositions as to "right birthplace, family, occupation, schooling" etc. **Jesus of Nazareth did not fit their presuppositions of a "King of the Jews."** When Jesus was only a baby, Simeon the aged prophet took him in his arms and predicted he was the "consolation of Israel and a light unto the Gentiles" but that he would become a "sign that is spoken against" (Lk. 2:22-35). When he was arrested and mocked and tortured by the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, there was no "form or comeliness" in him that any of the nation desired in its "king." Why would God plan it that his **Servant** should come into the world in such untoward surroundings? **In order to put people into the "refiner's fire."** All who beheld his glory through eyes of faith and saw beyond the humiliation of the incarnation that he was the Son of God, became sons of God. All who were blinded by their own carnal standards of "comeliness" and judged Jesus by them became "sons of disobedience." God wanted to get at the heart of human beings, for

that is where they make their true judgments! **What people turned away from the Servant of the Lord for when he was in human form on the earth, they still turn away from him today—his vicarious atonement.** Some are superficially in agreement with what they think is his pacifistic humanitarianism or his socialist human-rights stance, but they absolutely will not surrender to the truth that Jesus had to die for the sin and is to become Lord of their lives. This is what was so unacceptable to the self-righteous people of Jesus incarnate ministry. It remains a threat to the self-righteousness of people today. Isaiah deals with the vicarious atonement of the Messiah in chapter 53!

Unusual pain, sorrow and grief was equated (wrongly) with unusual guilt of sin in the ancient world. Job's 3 friends told Job his calamities were punishment from God for his sinfulness. The man born blind was stigmatized as a sinner by both the Pharisees and Jesus's own disciples (John 9:1ff). Jesus *corrected* this concept in Luke 13 by saying that those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were **not** worse sinners than others but that all calamities were warnings to the whole world to repent. And the Jews rationalized their prejudice against Jesus by mocking him as a criminal at his crucifixion. Rather than admit their own ideas about God's Messiah were contrary to the OT, they accused Jesus of blasphemy and pointed to his violation of their traditions and his humble life-style as proof that God was punishing him for being such a sinner (Job 3:7-8; 8:4; 11:6; 15:1-6). The most severe and significant suffering of the **Servant-Messiah** was spiritual, not physical. Many men have suffered physically (crucifixion and other tortures), but the **Servant** was innocent, without sin, and actually became sin and suffered spiritual separation (death) from the Father for those who actually deserved it. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb *meholal* translated "wounded" means literally **pierced, perforated**, a precise prophecy of the piercing of Christ body by the Roman soldiers (John 19:34-37). But does Isaiah 53:4-5 indicate the atonement of Christ also provided miraculous healing of physical sicknesses for all mankind (even for all believers)? Some modern faith healers have contended that all believers in the atonement of Christ may expect God to heal their bodies. T. J. McCrossan in his *Bodily Healing and the Atonement*, p. 16 says, "Again all Christians should expect God to heal their bodies today, because Christ died to atone for our sickness as well as for our sins." Warren C. Roark, compiler of *Divine Healing*, pub. Warner Press, Anderson, Ind., 1945, records a statement by a modern advocate of this view, Mr. E. E. Byers, pg. 58: "God...in the atonement...made provision for the healing of man's mortal body so long as he lived in this world. Honest exegesis must admit the Hebrew words *makeoyoth* and *kholy* may literally mean "pain" and "sickness," one must understand they may also be figuratively translated "griefs" and "sorrows." The following considerations make it clear that Isaiah's prophecy of the atonement by the Suffering Servant did not mean to include physical healing for all believers:

The **context** (all important in proper exegesis) indicates the subject is sin, spiritual sickness, not physical sickness. If the atonement made provision for the healing of man's mortal body so long as he lived...he would live forever in this world! Death is the cumulative effect of one physical sickness or another!

In Matt. 8:16-17 a *portion* of Isaiah's prophecy is quoted in connection with Christ'

healing of some physical sicknesses. However, it is highly significant that verse 5 was **not** quoted by Matthew (i.e., “with his stripes we are healed”). Furthermore, Jesus was fulfilling verse 4 three years before the atonement was made! Verse 4 was fulfilled in his divine ministry of healing, and not when he hung on the cross. Matthew was simply claiming, therefore, that Christ in performing miracles of physical healing, was fulfilling what Isaiah prophesied of his healing ministry and not his atonement.

There is no statement in the whole Bible suggesting that Christ “bore our sicknesses in his own body on the tree,” or that he was made to be “sick, diseased, or possessed with infirmity” for us.

The NT plainly shows that not **all** of the healing of Jesus demanded faith in him. Thus, the efficacy of his atonement could not apply to such healing.

The NT plainly show that many people with faith in the atonement of Christ were not healed of their sicknesses, including the great apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:7ff).

If the atonement provides for physical healing, why does one not receive healing at conversion—the place where the efficacy of the atonement is applied?

If the atonement provides for physical healing, who do not **all** believers receive healing?

Why is there as large a *percentage* of sickness among believers as there is among unbelievers?

Why did Paul prescribe a medical treatment to Timothy for his “oft infirmities” (2 Tim. 5:23)?

Why are there so many failures among faithful, honest, believing people who so earnestly and diligently seek healing by prayer?

Out of 31 recorded instances of Jesus healing someone, only 2 or 3 times could it be said that faith was **required for the healing**. In most instances there is “no faith indicated” by the person healed. In some few cases faith was present in the sick person, but no required. And in another few cases there was faith in the person/persons bringing others to be healed—but such faith was not required or asked about!

Isaiah 53:6 plainly states the healing we receive from **Messiah’s** stripes is the healing from sin. Sin is “going astray” (Rom. 3:10-20). We still must suffer physical illnesses and death because of Eve’s and Adam’s sin, but no longer do we have to suffer spiritual illness and death! Sin is soul-sickness. It fractures, incapacitates, ineverates and destroys the personhood of human beings. Forgiveness through Christ’s vicarious atonement heals and saves us and restores us to the wholeness for which God created

us.

The **Servant-Messiah** was “cut off” from life in this world (Dan. 9:24-27). And although there were a few plain announcements from Christ himself that he was to die for the “ransom” of human sins (Jn. 1:29; Matt. 20:28; 26:26-29; Jn. 14:1-31; 16:10; 17:11), and many OT types and prophecies (Lk. 24:25-29), none of his contemporaries (not even his own disciples) would accept the doctrine that the Messiah was to die a vicarious sacrifice for man’s sins. The OT has at least four plain prophecies that the Messiah will die (Isa. 53:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 12:10—13:1; Psa. 22:1-31). Still, even those honest, courageous Jewish fishermen and tax-collectors who confessed that he was the Son of the Living God, refused to accept the predictions of Jesus himself that he was to die as a ransom (Matt. 16:21-23; 26:30-35; Mark 8:31-33; 14:26-31; Luke 9:43-45; 24:13ff; John 12:27-36—the crowd said, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever, i.e., does not die—John 8:32-36). Isaiah used the Hebrew word *khaphetz* in 53:10 and it is translated “will” in the RSV and NIV. The word literally means, “delighted” or “desired” and indicates that the death of the Messiah involved more than a sterile, unfeeling, deterministic plan of an unfeeling God. It is incomprehensible to the finite mind of sinful man how God could “delight” in the death of his Son, but he did. The Hebrew word translated *bruise* is *heheliy* and means to *make painful*. The Isaiah Scroll from Qumran has the word *vyhllhv* which means *that he might pierce him* (see comments Isa. 53:5). These verses in Isa. 53:10-12 are some of the strongest of the OT on the resurrection or immortality of the **Servant-Messiah**. The **Servant** dies, but he also lives on, succeeds, and carries on the work of atonement, redemption, justification, sanctification and intercession with which the Father has entrusted him, just as it was predicted he would do (Lk. 24:25ff). And he “ prospers” creating a world-wide kingdom (the church). Other OT prophecies of the resurrection of the Messiah: (a) Psa. 16:1-11 cited in Acts 2:25-33; (b) Psa. 110:1-7 cited in Acts 2:34-36; (c) Psa. 22:1-31 cited in Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; (d) 2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 89:3-4, cited in Acts 13:34, i.e., the perpetuated throne promised to David’s Messiah-Son presupposes victory over death; (e) Gen. 22 (Abraham and Isaac; Heb. 11:17-19—Abraham on Mt. Moriah, participated in a dramatic typical event portraying Calvary and the Empty Tomb—perhaps Jesus was alluding to this when he said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day...and was glad” (Jn. 8:56); (f) Psa. 118:22—the Stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. There is no doubt that Isaiah 53 is Messianic and that it is predicting Jesus’s atoning death and resurrection. Philip, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, interpreted it thus, Acts 8:26-40. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is an incontrovertible fact of history if ever there was one! Isaiah predicts the **Servant** will produce “seed” or “offspring.” He shall have a family, but it will be a spiritual family (Rom. 9:8; Ga. 3:15-20; 3:23-29; Heb. 2:13). The **Servant** shall fall into the ground like a grain of wheat and die, and then bear much fruit (Jn. 12:23-26). And the *khaphetz* (“delight”) of Jehovah shall succeed through his efforts. The delight of Jehovah is, of course, his eternal plan for the redemption of mankind! What wonder, what unsearchable grace, that Jehovah’s delight should be the salvation and regeneration of a planet full of wicked rebels. But more wonderful, his Son, the **Servant-Messiah**, should come to this planet in the form of a human and willingly submit to humiliating death allowing himself, though absolutely innocent, to become sin on our behalf! Hallelujah—what a Savior!

The **Servant** will have “travail of...soul” (cf. 49:4ff). But he will be “satisfied.” For the joyous reward that was set before him, he could endure the cross (Heb. 12:2). He will look back from his enthronement at the right hand of the Father and see that he has succeeded in accomplishing the once-for-all-time redemption and regeneration of the Father’s creation. As Young points out, the suffix on the Hebrew word *beda’etto* is difficult of interpretation. Is the suffix subjective or objective—that is, is Isaiah speaking of the knowledge that the **Servant** himself possesses or is it knowledge of the **Servant on the part of others?** We think the context is emphasizing the successfulness of the **Servant**, himself, and that it is through his own incarnation (**human experience, or “knowledge”**) that he performs his work of justification. It was through the **experience of obedience as a Son** that he became the author of salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:7-9; Phil. 2:5-11). The righteous **Servant** (*tzaddiyk ‘aveddiy*) will make many righteous (*vatzeddiyk*). He makes it possible for us to become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21) **because of what he “learned” or “experienced” in his Incarnation.** This was the grace that was to be ours which the prophets prophesied (1 Pet. 1:10-12). He bore our iniquities and became a “curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). A whole volume could justifiably be written on Isaiah 53 alone. Perhaps the most intriguing question about Isaiah 53 is: “If the New Testament is so clear about its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, why do the majority of the Jews today not see and understand it?” A few references to **The Servant of Jehovah** in Jewish apocryphal literature will provide a partial answer. Modern Jewish interpretations of Isaiah 53 may be summed up in three categories: (a) most prevalent among Jewish writers is that Isaiah 53 means **the nation of Israel**—some say *empirical* Israel; some say *ideal* Israel; some say the *pious remnant* of the true Israel; (b) some say Isaiah 53 means the *prophetical order*—e.e., the collective body of the prophets—as the sacrificial victim taking upon itself the sins of the people; (c) and others say Isaiah 53 means *an individual* of the past (e.g., Hezekiah, Isaiah, Josiah, but most frequently, Jeremiah), but a *human* individual—some said, an *unknown sufferer* (sounds like the apostles first answer to Jesus at Ceasarea Philippi, Matt. 16); (d) some orthodox Jews believe the Messiah is yet to come, but he will be a great warrior-king like David, a special **human** being who will conquer the Gentile world and put the Jews in charge of the whole earth.

ISAIAH 54:1—56:12

Introduction

The Hebrew word for **covenant** is *berith*; probably from an Akkadian (Babylonian) word meaning “to fetter, to bind, to be obligated.” It has parallels in Hittite, Egyptian, Assyrian, and Aramaic. The Hebrew *berith* is used in the OT over 280 times. The Greek word in the NT for “covenant” (as in the book of Hebrews) is *diatheke*, from *diathithemai* which means, “to make a disposition of one’s own property.” It is often translated “testament” or “will.” The Jewish translators translated the Septuagint (the Greek language OT) and used the word *diatheke* to express *berith*.

So, the words used in the Bible to describe God’s covenant with man are words expressing **unilateral** (“**one sided**”) enactment. There is no such thing as a bilateral covenant issued by Almighty God. His covenant is arbitrarily dictated by him; it is not negotiable: (a) God makes disposition of his property (both spiritual and physical) by himself. He binds himself to his own agreement. But his agreement has certain stipulations for those wishing to become beneficiaries of his disposition; (b) Galatians 3:15-18 and Romans 4:1-25 teach that God’s covenant terms have **always** been by faith and not by merit. God disposes of his property by his grace; it is appropriated by those who want it by faith and obedient to the arbitrary terms set forth by God in his “will and testament” throughout the different “dispensations” (i.e., patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian); (c) faith is something that is active and obedient (Ex. 19:5), but it is still faith, not merit. We do not negotiate with God on terms of our merit—we are not meritorious enough—we accept his covenant of grace by trusting in the merit of Jesus Christ in our place.

One cannot plumb the depths of the idea of covenant relationship with God in formalities, rituals or personal holiness. Covenant is more than that—covenant with God is a “communion” or a fellowship—a joining together as in a “marriage” (both OT and NT use the metaphor “marriage” to explain what “covenant” means). Our covenant (treasure) is a Personality, not just “things.” Our covenant is **Christ**. When we join ourselves to Christ by faith and faithfulness, we then are in covenant relationship to God—married to Christ. When we allow ourselves to be “transformed into his image” we are cooperating with the covenant God created for us (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). When we are made to be “partakers of the divine image” we are brought into covenant relationship to Christ (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

The result of the **Suffering-Servant’s** redemptive work outlined in Isa. 52:13—53:12 shall be a *prolific spiritual offspring*. He will “bring many sons to glory” (Heb. 2:10-13). That is why Zion (God’s faithful remnant in the OT which will become his church in the NT) is told to “break forth into singing.” The physical descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:2-8, etc.) did not produce spiritually-minded offspring as they should have.

Most of his offspring turned to idolatry and ungodliness. But when the **Servant** shall have completed his redemptive work Israel shall produce spiritual offspring prolifically (Ga. 3:29). Jerusalem cannot produce because God, her Husband, has **forsaken** her on account of her sin. She will be given over to captivity for a season. But the time will come when she will produce more children than a woman who had never been forsaken (cf. Isa. 49:18-26; 51:1-3; Zech. 2:1-5; Hosea 1:10-12). She will produce a great multitude “which no man can number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues...” (Rev. 7:9). Inasmuch as the “**new Jerusalem:**” (the Messiah’s kingdom—the church) is to produce an innumerable offspring, she will **need to “enlarge her tent.”** God instructs the people of Isaiah’s day to stretch their faith to accept an expanded concept of the Messiah’s kingdom. God is going to extend covenant relationship to more than Jews; he is going to include “the nations.” Ezekiel’s vision of the glorified “temple, land, city and priesthood” (Ezek. chs. 40-48) is a graphic, figurative prophecy of the **immense** enlargement which will be necessary for the coming Messianic kingdom. Ezekiel’s “temple” was never intended to be literally built. It is hyperbole. The *terumah* (“most holy place” RSV, Ezek. 48:12) measures about 2500 square miles, nearly twice as large as the whole area of geographic Judea! The rebuilt temple (Ezek. 40:2) of Ezekiel was 500 reeds (45000 square feet), larger than the literal Jerusalem of Ezekiel’s day or our day. Ezekiel’s exaggerated temple land and city are visionary predictions of the **enlargement** of the Messianic Age. Micah predicts, “A day for the building of your walls! In that day (the Messianic age) the boundary shall be far extended” (Micah 7:11ff).

“Marriage” is the relationship that gives human beings the BEST experience of what their relationship to God should be! It is supposed to be a relationship where two people become “one” in purpose, goal, action, thought, etc. God’s people are to take comfort in the fact that their redemption draws nigh. The finished work of the **Servant** is now on the prophetic horizon (Isa. 53), therefore, Zion need no longer look upon her temporary captivity and “indignation of God” with hopelessness. She shall forget all her shame when the **Servant** comes and takes her shame upon himself. The reproach associated with spiritual barrenness will be forgotten when she begins to produce spiritual children through the gospel. She will then be the church of Christ “without spot or blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). Through the **Servant**, God will “reclaim his wife.” God will be reunited, “remarried” (as it were) to his people in a **new covenant** relationship (Isa. 56:6-8; Jer. 31:27-34; Ezek. 37:24-28, etc.). The Old covenant will pass away and be remembered no more (Jer. 3:15-16). They must remember that the prophet Isaiah is speaking the promise of Almighty God. They must find their reasons for singing and shouting and for overcoming their shame and hopelessness in the fact that these are promises of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth! There are numerous places where the believers relationship to God is depicted as a “marriage” (Isa.50:1-3; 62:1-5; Song of Solomon; Ezek. 16; Hosea chs. 1-3; Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-12; John 3:27-30; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 12:1-6; 19:9; 21:1-4). Jehovah will call back his forsaken “wife” (cf. Ezek. 16:53-63; Hosea 1:10-12; 2:14-23; 3:1-5), through the Messianic covenant. The Lord will forsake Zion for only a short time (during the “indignation”—see Daniel 8:19; 11:36) compared with the time he will show great mercy to Zion. The “indignation” will last only 600 years (from the captivities until the coming of Christ-Messiah). But Jehovah will show **everlasting** loving-kindness to

Zion. The interesting thing about this passage in which the Lord refers to his reconciliation to his “wife” is that it is to include the “nations” (*goyim*, Gentiles). The Gentiles will be called into the new covenant relationship and be “married” to Christ as his “bride.” Although the prophets predicted it and Christ taught it, many of the Jews could never accept it. It took even some of the apostles a few years to understand and accept it (Acts 10,11,15, Gal. 2, etc.).

The phrase, “...taught of Jehovah” is quoted by Jesus (John 6:45) in his sermon on The Bread of Life. It is therefore a prediction of the Messiah. Isaiah was predicting the Incarnation! Jesus Christ was the “bread come down out of heaven.” The new Zion would be established and continually sustained by “eating” the incarnated Bread from Heaven. The new Zion would have the privilege of being taught directly by God in the flesh. The old Zion had only “divers portions and divers manners” of God’s revelation through the prophets (Heb. 1:1), but in the Messianic age the new Zion would be spoken to by God Incarnate in the Son. Anyone taught by Jesus is taught by God himself. The Jewish refusal to believe that God would become incarnated in the flesh as **The Teacher, The Servant-Messiah**, was inexcusable. The prophets foretold it (see also Micah 5:2 and see Matt. 2:3-6—the “One from eternity” was to be born in Bethlehem).

Redemption has been predicted and explained as occurring in the **Suffering-Servant-Messiah** (cf. 53). The invitation has been extended for participation in that redemption through covenant relationship (cf. 54). **Now the *bond and bounds*** of that covenant relationship is declared to be in the ***word of Jehovah*** which is faithful and powerful. The point of the agricultural metaphors of this passage (i.e., “wine and milk purchased without money”) is that God’s provision of redemption through the **Servant** shall be by **grace**. Peter makes it plain that the OT prophets predicted salvation by grace (1 Pet. 1:10-12). It was not astonishing to the Jews that Jehovah would be gracious to them. What was astonishing to many was that he would grant them mercy without their having earned it! This is fulfilled, according to the inspired apostle Paul, in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. “What God promised to the fathers...he fulfilled by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and proclaiming through Jesus the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:32-40). Inasmuch as the apostle Paul quoted (or paraphrased) Isaiah 55:3 in Acts 13:34, and plainly indicates it was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must look upon this **whole chapter** of Isaiah as **Messianic**. Therefore, the “him” of Isa. 55:4 is the **Messiah-Servant** who has been given as a “witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.” The Hebrew word translated “leader” is *nagiyd* which means “prince” and is the same word used in Daniel 9:25-26. The word *metsaveh* is Hebrew for “commander” and comes from *mitsvah* or “commandment.” Thus the one to be give for a witness to the nations will be a ruler and a commandment-giver (cf. Isa. 54:13). It was in the same Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia where Paul quoted Isaiah 55:3 that he also told the recalcitrant Jews that the covenant of the Lord was for the Gentiles to whom he would thenceforth go and preach (Acts 13:42-52).

The sovereign plan of God for the redemption of the world is, in all its details, divine motives, and divine workings **beyond the experience of humankind**. That God himself could become incarnated in human flesh and live a perfect life (without sin in a

fleshly body) and then willingly allow himself to be “made sin” on sinful man’s behalf so that man might be given an imputed righteousness which man does not deserve, **is incomprehensible to man** because man has no experiential base from which to comprehend such an event. Thus, the “For” in Isa. 55:10 connects the idea that salvation by grace (55:1-5) is “higher than the thoughts of mankind” and to the statement that God’s word will accomplish what God sends “him” (Jesus) to do! The cross is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:18—2:15). God’s plan to redeem man through **The Servant** and his **New Covenant** is a challenge to the pride of man who believes he can secure his own salvation by his own wisdom. Therefore, most of mankind refuses to accept God’s plan because God’s plan is beyond man’s wisdom. But that is just the point—God’s plan is a **revelation**. Habakkuk had this problem. He could not understand why God would punish the Jews by the Chaldeans. But God told Habakkuk, in effect, “I do not ask, Habakkuk, that you understand it, but that you believe it and accept it on the basis of all the confirmations I have given you that my word comes to pass.” The apostle Paul quoted from Habakkuk in Romans 1:16-17. The gospel of God cannot be understood in all its fulness by the human mind (Romans 11:33-36)—it must be simply believed and accepted on the basis of the physical, historical evidences given by God through “nature,” miracles seen by eyewitnesses and logic.

On the basis of the **Suffering Servant’s** atonement and the offer of a new covenant relationship through his accomplishments, the emphasis switches now to **man’s free choice** to appropriate that covenant. Jehovah’s salvation by grace was “near” viewed from the divine perspective (though it was 700 years after Isaiah predicted it). In God’s salvation, his righteous grace will be revealed (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-25). **Logically, then, those who choose the benefits of his righteous grace must accept the responsibility of such a choice which is to DO righteously (Rom. 12:1-2).** Practicing righteousness can be *clearly defined!* Doing what God’s covenant terms say is right and refraining from what God’s covenant says is evil—this is practicing righteousness. The apostle John amplifies this principle in his writings (John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; 1 John 2:3-6; 2:24; 3:19-24; 4:6; 5:1-3, etc.). In our text here, Isaiah uses the “**Sabbath**” as an example of man’s obligation to keep God’s covenant according to God’s terms. Next to circumcision, the Sabbath was the central sign of the covenant in the OT (Ex. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12ff). This does not mean the Sabbath day was to be a commandment of the New Covenant which the Messiah would establish. **Sabbath** is used in a number of Messianic prophecies to exemplify, metaphorically, the prediction that members of the future Messianic kingdom would be covenant-keepers instead of covenant breakers like the Jews of the days of the prophets (e.g. Isa. 66a:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; 46:3). Sabbath keeping on a day (the 7th day of the Jewish week) in the New Covenant dispensation is definitely abrogated as a law of God since the OT ordinances were “nailed” to the cross (Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 9:10; 10:1, etc.). Sabbath-keeping is, at best, merely a matter of opinion in the New Dispensation (Rom. 14:1-12; Col. 2:16-23). The use of the Sabbath by Isaiah in this Messianic text is a clear example of “times-coloring” in prophetic literature. How is a prophet 700 years removed from the Messianic age to communicate the idea of sincere covenant keeping to his audience? He must do it in terminology and practices contemporary with his own dispensation and age. Therefore he idealizes the concept of covenant-keeping with

one's sincerity in keeping the Mosaic Sabbath-day. A careful, contextual and grammatical understanding of Hebrews 4:1-13 will inform the reader that the **entire Christian life** is to be the "Sabbath" of God in the New Dispensation (Christian dispensation)—just as a careful, contextual and grammatical understanding of 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 will inform the reader that the **entire Christian life** is to be the "Passover" of God in the New Testament dispensation of God's grace.

Foreigners (*nakerily* in Hebrew) and sojourners (*ger*, in Hebrew) could become citizens and members of the Old covenant people but they were prohibited from participating in full fellowship with the people of the land (Ex. 12:43-49; Lev. 16:29; 17:12; 18:26; 22:10; 25:35; 25:40; Num. 15:15; 16:29; 19:10; 35:15, etc.). **Eunuchs (*soriysiym* in Hebrew—castrated servants) were also bared from the temple of God (Deut. 23:1).** Naturally, when they heard Isaiah's magnificent predictions of the glorious Messianic age to come they would assume "second class citizenship" and alienation from the presence of God's holy throne to be their lot in that age also. Taking the case of the **eunuchs** first the Lord says they shall have an inheritance in the Messianic kingdom in spite of the fact that they were "imperfect" and could produce no progeny. In the Jewish mind Messianic inheritance was tied *directly* to the land and tribal inheritances. If a man could produce no offspring he had no hope for his descendants in the Messianic future. But there will be no such limitations or hindrances to full favor in the Messianic age. If men will keep God's covenant in the New Dispensation and **choose** what pleases the Lord, they will be brought into God's "house" (the church) in full fellowship. Eunuchs were sometimes eunuchs by choice (Matt. 19:19:10-12)—but it was for the sake of the kingdom of God—it was not a rebellious sin (any more than "leprosy" was). But they were arbitrarily declared "unclean" by the law of God in the OT to demonstrate that God demands **perfection**. Eunuchs were in that condition either by being forced to be by someone else, or by some circumstance of birth. Outward observance is not sufficient (Matt. 5:17—6:18; John 4:21-24; Matt. 15:1-19), the New Covenant will be written on the **heart** (Jer. 31:31-34). In the Messianic kingdom there will be no distinctions as to race, physical perfection, economic or education status (Gal. 3:23-29). All will be full-fledged sons of the covenant, descendant of Abraham according to faith, heirs of the promises of God (Eph. 2:11-22; Rom. 8:12-17). We have a specific example of the fulfillment of this in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Here is one eunuch who has a name that is far more honored than it could have ever been by a long line of illustrious descendants—"son of King Jesus, prince of Israel." The primary reason for restrictions about sojourners and eunuchs in the OT was ceremonial uncleanness. But those who shall choose the covenant terms of the Messiah and keep them shall be cleansed of all defilement (ceremonial and moral) (Zech. 12:10—14:21; Mal. 3:1-5, etc.).

There is an abundance of predictions from Isaiah (and other prophets, Ezekiel, Zechariah, *etal*) that Jehovah will join **foreigners** (Gentiles) to Zion in the coming Messianic age. There are also a number of predictions that these "new" covenant citizens will become ministers in the New Dispensation (the Messianic age—the church) (e.g., Isa. 60:3,7,10; 66:18-23; Zech 14:16-19). These *ungodly foreigners* will "love" the name of Jehovah and keep his covenant ordinances (New Covenant). The foreigners, excluded from the covenant of Israel under the Old Dispensation, because of

ceremonial and moral uncleanness, will be accepted because they love the name of Jehovah and choose to become the Lord's taking his name as theirs (Isa. 43:1-5). **Every member** of the New Covenant is a **priest** (minister) (see 1 Pet. 1:5,9; Heb. 13:15-16). This was absolutely **startling** to the Jewish mind—their OT law of Moses prohibited “foreigners”—especially the “uncircumcised” from coming near to the tabernacle and, later, the temple (Gentiles could come only as far as the “court of the Gentiles” even in the days of Jesus! HOW COULD GOD ALLOW AN “UNCIRCUMCISED” **FOREIGNER** BECOME A “PRIEST” OR “MINISTER” TO THE LORD—IMPOSSIBLE! **No! Not impossible with God, for Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will provide absolute cleansing of all “foreigners” (sinners—Jews and Gentiles) so they may minister to God.** Jehovah would someday give full covenant membership to Gentiles. Jesus quoted Isa. 56:7 in Mark 11:7; and he quoted 56:8 in John 10:16. Yet, when Jesus stood and read Isaiah 61:1-2 and applied it to God's mercy extended to Gentiles, even in OT times, they wanted to kill Jesus. The following excerpts illustrate the incorrigible obstinance of the Jewish theologians to accept the predictions of their prophets that Jehovah would accept the Gentiles into full covenant relationship:

Everyman's Talmud, p. 66 & 317—“Kill the best of the Gentiles! Crush the head of the best of snakes!” (Mech. To xiv, 7:27a). “Gentiles are addicted to licentiousness” (Jeb. 98a). “The Rabbis were revolted by the low standards of conduct they saw practiced around them and were thankful for the finer ideals which their religions offered them. A prayer, composed to be said on leaving the House of Study, reads: ‘I give thanks before Thee, O Lord my God and God of my fathers, that Thou hast set my lot among those who sit in the House of Study and the synagogue, and hast not set my lot with those who frequent the theatres and circuses; for while I labour to inherit Paradise, they labour for the pit of destruction.’” (p. Ber. 7d). “The Holy one, blessed be He, clears Himself with respect to the gentile nations by giving them their reward for the minor precepts which they observed in this world so as to judge and sentence them in the Word to Come, that they may have no pleas to make and no merit can be found on their behalf” (Tanchuma Kedoshim I). “R. Eliezer declared, ‘No Gentiles will have a share in the World to Come; as it is said, ‘The wicked shall return to the nether-world, even all the nations that forgot God’ (Ps. ix. 17); ‘the wicked’ refers to the evil among Israel” R. Joshua said to him, “If the verse had stated ‘The wicked shall return to the nether-world and all the nations,’ and had stopped there, I should have agreed with you. Since, however, the text adds, ‘that forget God.’ behold, there must be righteous men among the nations who will have a share in the World to Come.” (Tosifta Sanh. Xiii. 2). That the righteous of all peoples will inherit the bliss of the Hereafter is the accepted doctrine of Rabbinic Judaism.” “The daughter of an Israelite may not assist a gentile woman in childbirth, since she would be assisting to bring to birth a child for idolatry.” (Mishnah, A.Sar. 2:1).

But Isaiah is not the only prophet to predict Gentile acceptance (see also Amos 9:11-12—and fulfilled in Acts 15:12-21; Micah 4:2; 7:15-17; Zech. 8:20-23; 9:9-10; 14:16-21). The point of Isaiah's remarks here seems to be that **anyone** who loves the name of Jehovah and keeps his covenant terms will be acceptable (Acts 10:34-35). Doers are disciples!

Jehovah will not necessarily bring foreigners to the literal hill of Moriah where the Jewish temple stood. He will bring them to Zion (Heb. 12:22ff), the New Testament church (cf. Isa. 2:1-4). The following descriptive phrases, "...prayer...joyful...sacrifices accepted..." point to full covenant membership for foreigners. Gentiles will be restored to loving fellowship with the Creator through the Messiah and his New Covenant. The Messiah's sacrifice ("once-for-all-time" Heb. 10:1-18 will atone for all men's sins. God's new house, Zion, will be for men of **all nations**—those previously "separated from the Messiah, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:11-22). God will bring them to his "house of prayer for all nations" i.e., the New Testament church (Mark 11:17) because the Messiah will cleanse God's house of those who profane it because they have not been perfectly forgiven of their sins.

ISAIAH 57:1—59:21

Introduction

These chapters deal with the great contrast between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. The wretchedness and lostness of covenant-breakers is not apparent to the world. Only a small minority of people (believers) seem to be able to comprehend that breaking covenant the of God leads to ruin.

Yet, the ruination of disobedience to God is apparent from three sources. **(1)** It is apparent from history (society). Isaiah represents the people of his day “wearied” with their wicked ways (57:10); he says they asked, “we fasted” and God takes no knowledge of it; he says they realized they were groping in darkness and moaning like doves looking for justice but not finding it. **(2)** Their consciences told them about their lostness. Their sins “testified against them” 59:12. **(3)** God’s word, through the prophets, pronounced social disintegration as a consequence of disobedience. **SO WHY DID THEY NOT COMPREHEND IT?**

Because they did not want to comprehend it! Their pride ruled their thinking and willing. They refused to give up and give in to God. They did not think sin was hopeless—they still hoped they could get by with it—that things would get better. They were trusting in human righteousness to solve their lostness, but self-righteousness is the cause, not the cure!

They loved unrighteousness (see John 3:19-20). They **refused** to come to the light lest their deeds be **exposed** for what they **really** were. They really didn’t **want** to know what the consequences of evil were.

God could find no one to intervene (59:16), so he sent his own “Arm” (the Messiah) and intervened for himself. His Own Person, his Own Spirit, restored the possibility of covenant relationship. Thank God for his grace!

On the other hand, covenant-keepers are not going to be coddled or indulged in the grace of God. They are going to be tested and then used. Being useful is the most sought-after experience in human life. I do not mean exploited, but used for purpose, used for fulfillment, used for edification. They will be “springs of water,” “watered gardens,” and “builders.” (Isa. 58:11-12). Covenant-keepers are those who are “riding high” (58:14).

In this section Isaiah seeks to draw the “faithful remnant” into **communion** with God through the **covenant** God has made with them by Moses and the law in anticipation of the **New Covenant** God will make with them through the **Servant-Messiah**.

Yes! In Isaiah's day those who were fond of sin were **indifferent** toward the death of righteous people. They cared not at all. When a *righteous* person died, sinners may have actually been glad to be rid of one whose righteousness stood out as a condemnation of their sin. Isaiah addresses a problem that has plagued mankind ever since the Fall in Eden. The problem is: "Why is it that the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer?" Of course, it is a problem only because of **faulty perspective**. History, looked at from the human perspective, (limited to the past and the present; limited to this world and this life only) does *seem* to substantiate the idea that it "does not pay" to be good. But history seen from the **divine perspective** (by faith in the revelation of God about the past, present and *future*), says quite the opposite. The righteous person may *perish* (Heb. 'avad, "be destroyed") and the world evaluates it as something indifferent, or even to be rejoiced in. But the prophet of God says when the righteous person dies it is far from a tragedy for he is taken away from the evil to come. That is, the righteous man is delivered from the trials and tribulations of this world (cf. Rev. 7:14-17; 14:13; Psa. 116:15). Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, writes of the social chaos in the northern Ten Tribes (the divided nation of "Israel" cf. Hosea 4:1ff). No doubt the same kind of injustice and destruction was being directed against the righteous in the southern kingdom (Judah). Micah, also a contemporary of Isaiah, speaks of the ungodliness of Judah (cf. Micah 2:8-11; 3:1-3; 6:6-16). Micah agrees with Isaiah that "the godly man has perished from the earth..." (Micah 7:2). The Hebrew word *yanuhu* is translated "rest" and has the connotation of "repose" (relaxation, ease). It is more precise than the usual Hebrew word for rest which is *shavath* ("Sabbath"). Isaiah likens this rest unto sleep in the "bed." The world *shalom* at the first of the verse indicates the utter peacefulness which death brings to the man who "walks" in righteousness (cf. Dan. 12:10-13). Even if the righteous man must walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psa. 23). The wicked covenant-breakers of Isaiah's day have it all wrong! They are self-deceived. They think the righteous have come to an untimely death because of their stubborn faithfulness to keep God's covenant. But it is the wicked covenant-breakers who shall suffer! **THAT IS STILL MUCH THE SAME ATTITUDE OF IMPENITENT SINNERS TODAY! THEY ARE INDIFFERENT (AND SOMETIMES GLAD) WHEN A RIGHTEOUS PERSON PASSES FROM THE SCENE OF HISTORY. Oh, there is sometimes a superficial, hyperbolic "gushing" about the passing of a "good" person who has been made famous by significant contribution to the physical welfare of society— BUT IT IS MOSTLY HYPOCRITICAL. Worldly, humanistic-minded people are GLAD to be rid of anyone who, by lip and life condemns their rebellion against God!**

The depravity of the rulers of Judah (57:1-5) infected the whole nation. The "smooth stones" of the valley apparently are to be linked to the idolatry being practiced—perhaps used to build altars with the image of Molech, the pagan god, engraved on them.. The question of God through Isaiah is almost incredulous, "Do you actually believe this worshiping of rocks is acceptable to Me, the *Living God*?" The worship of Molech (in Hebrew the word *Molech* means, "governing"), the god of the Ammonites was best noted for its gross sexual orgies and human sacrifice of children. It was forbidden by Moses (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5); it was allowed by Solomon to please his foreign wives (1 Kings 11:7); it was principally worshiped in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna of the NT)

(see 2 Chron. 33:6). Archaeologists have found houses of ancient Judah & Israel in which the skeletons of sacrificed children were placed in earthen-ware jars and built into the foundations of these houses “to appease the god Molech.” One might wonder how the Hebrew people could ever succumb to such gross depravity. They had the Law of Moses. They even copied some of those Mosaic Laws and fastened them to the door-posts of their houses so they might be reminded constantly of Jehovah’s presence and his revealed will. Many modern Jews today have what is called a *mezuzah* (a small metal container in which is a scroll usually with Deut. 6:4 on it) attached to the outside of their front-door-frame and they kiss their fingers and touch the *mezuzah* upon entering and leaving their doors. **Isaiah 57:8 tells the tragic story! These people had deliberately taken these “memorials” of scripture off their door-posts and hidden them “behind” the posts. Out of sight, out of mind!** The Hebrew people had long ago rejected the word of God (2 Kings 17:19; 2 Chron. 36:16; Amos 2:4, etc.). Incredibly, the books of the Law of the Lord had been lost at one point in Judah’s history (2 Kings 22:8ff). These people had prostituted themselves to pagan gods. What they were doing was no accident. It was not because they had been socially deprived, or because they were born in a “ghetto.” They voluntarily chose to “uncover” themselves to another. This is a figurative description of the intimacy with which they joined themselves to the priests and priestesses—prostitutes in their pagan “groves” and “temples.” **THEY TRIED TO HIDE EVERY VESTIGE OF ANY REMINDER (“BEHIND THEIR DOOR-POSTS”) OF JEHOVAH-GOD!** Many modern people today “STAY AWAY” from anything religious (Bibles, church houses, preachers, Christian music) as much as possible so they will not be reminded that God is their Creator and wants to be the Guide of their lives! We must **not “hide”** our faith in Christ—we must “wear” it in every deed and word we contribute to the world where we live and travel! It doesn’t require that we wear a “cross-necklace” or carry a Bible everywhere we go—just live out in our daily activities the life of Jesus as documented in the New Testament¹

All the time the people of Israel/Judah were engaging in idolatry they were also maintaining a facade of righteousness by offering sacrifices in the **temple** and observing certain Sabbath regulations (cf. Amos 8:4-6; Isa. 1:10-15). But the Omnipotent Jehovah, the high and lofty One—the Omnipresent God does not dwell in “houses made with hands” (see Isa. 66:1-2; Acts 7:49-50). He dwells in absolute unendingness (“eternity”). He sees all things at once. There is no time with him. Thus, he is able to talk about Judah’s captivity and redemption all at the same time. The same *perspective* is available to human beings through *faith* in God and Christ. **We must not think of God and Christ dwelling in church-buildings, however ornate or simple they may be!** God also dwells in men who are of a contrite and humble spirit—for that is a “good” place. The Lord could not dwell in the nation of Israel/Judah as it was during the days of the prophets for it was haughty and stupid, thinking God could be confined to a “temple made with hands.” God dwells in the church (made up of people) (1 Cor. 3:16-17) by dwelling in individual believers (1 Cor. 6:19-20). **BELIEVING PEOPLE ARE GOD’S “HOUSE.”** The wicked have no “house” in which God can live and cleanse their consciences—they are tossed like the sea, churning up mire and dirt. From the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* newspaper of September 22, 1941 comes the following story:

“Seven years of tortured nights, when he awakened screaming at the specter of the man who had befriended him and whom he had killed, have ended for Harold Malmberg. Malmberg, 27 years old, died yesterday in the Nebraska Penitentiary hospital from poison he swallowed three days before, Warden Neil Olson said. During his seven years, Malmberg ‘was a model prisoner,’ who never complained and did not seek parole, Olson added. But he could not face his conscience. Malmberg had few nights of peace after he shot Russell Goodwin three times in 1934 and left him beside the road to die, after Goodwin, a traveling salesman, had picked up the hitchhiking youth. In prison he had nightmares in which the man he admitted murdering ‘came back every night to sit on his bed and talk to him,’ the warden explained. In the daytime, Malmberg was ‘a jovial sort who did the tasks required of him cheerfully and well.’ While he steadfastly refused to tell what he had swallowed, doctors labored continuously over Malmberg from the time he was discovered ill early Friday morning until he died. The poison apparently had been stolen from the prison photographic darkroom where he worked. Malmberg consistently denied he intended to kill Goodwin when he ordered the salesman out of his car at pistol point. The jury did not accept his plea of insanity, and the Des Moines, Iowa, youth was sentenced to life imprisonment.”

God exposes the hypocrisy of their religiosity and makes it plain that he does indeed know what they are doing! They are not **fasting** to “afflict” their souls and focus on righteousness. While they pretend to fast, they are really indulging in their favorite occupation—making money. A word about fasting is in order here. The Hebrew word used for **fast** in the Pentateuch (i.e., Law of Moses) is *‘innah* and means literally, “to afflict” the soul (Lev. 16:29). The Hebrew word most often used **after** the Pentateuch (and *not* used in the Pentateuch) is *tzum* meaning literally, “to abstain.” *Both* words are used in Isa. 58:3. Actually, fasting was commanded in the Law of Moses only once (Lev. 16:29) and that on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Apparently the Hebrew people amplified this command and extended it to most any time of sorrow or need for repentance. Some Israelites were capable of fasting with proper motives (2 Sam. 7:6; 2 Sam. 1:12; Judges 20:26; 2 Kings 21:12-29; Psa. 109:24; Jer. 36:9; Esther 4:1-3; 4:16; Nehemiah 1:4). The Jewish people who came back from the captivities had doubts about the efficacy of so many **fasts** and inquired of the prophets and priests whether they should keep them all or not (Zech. 7:1-6; 8:13). In Isaiah’s day these **fasts** were being exploited for mercenary purposes. The **fasts** rather than providing an opportunity for people to abstain from worldly pursuits and afflict their souls and concentrate on God’s holiness, provided opportunities for them to haggle, strive, contend, argue and even physically strike one another over profiteering. Leupold visualizes these verses: “The prophet follows them to their place of assembly on a fast day. There, off in a corner, two men are not evaluating their own conduct and that of their nation; they are not seeking the face of God in true repentance. They are carrying on a business transaction. Or...while they are publicly engaged in holy exercises, at home the laborer who is working for them is slaving under heavy burdens and is being oppressed.” **Rhetorically, the Lord asks, “Do you think this is the kind of fast I would approve?** Their humility was a mockery. The long, tender rush was easily bent double without breaking and furnished a graphic figure for the bent-over false humility of these

hypocrites. Jesus described the false humility of the fasting hypocrites (Pharisees) of his day as *skuthropos* (Greek, for “sad, dejected, sullen, morose”). Jesus said the hypocrites of his day made their normal faces to disappear (Greek, *aphanizousin*) so they might put on faces (*hopos phanosin*) of fasting (Matt. 6:16-18). These people of Isaiah’s day were extreme in their pretension...but none of it fooled God! We cannot put on a sad face and fool God—we cannot put on a happy face and fool God; we cannot put on **any** “face” and fool God—for God looks on the heart! The essence of covenant-keeping, according to Micah, is not spectacular religious ritual or sacrifice but simply being God-like in the everyday, mundane relationships with both God and mankind. Micah writes, “He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). This is essentially what Isaiah says is **true fasting**. It should not have been strange to the people of Judah that one of their prophets would exhort them to care for the poor. The Law of Moses was very clear on caring for the poor (Deut. 14:28—15:18). The Law was also explicit as to responsibilities toward one’s own flesh and blood (family relationships) in such areas as training and discipline of children, Levirate law of provision for in-laws, divorce, inheritance laws, etc. It seems almost incredible that people should have to be reminded to take care of their families, yet even in the New Covenant scriptures Christians are admonished to do so (1 Thess. 4:10-12; 1 Tim.. 5:8). **Isaiah says it very succinctly—the “fast” God chooses is “to loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke—share your bread (food) with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked cover him, and do not hide yourself from your own flesh!” THAT REQUIRES, NOT MERELY “ABSTAINING” FROM THINGS, BUT HUMBLY AFFLICING ONE’S SOUL IN REPENTANCE AND GOOD DEEDS!**

The Hebrew word *oneg* (v. 13) and *te’annag* (v. 14) is translated “delight” but literally means, “delicate, exquisite, luxurious.” The Lord insists that his people **cherish** his Sabbath. Why is the Sabbath so significant? It was the one condition or requirement that could provide a covenant-keeping relationship that would bring the Hebrew **closer to Jehovah than any other**. The Sabbath was instituted and set aside as holy unto the Lord long before the Mosaic law. It was given as a type and symbol of the cessation from labor (or rest) into which one enters when entering into covenant relationship provided by Christ. In other words, the old Sabbath was an experience symbolic of the Messianic (Christian) experience. The Sabbath rest “remaining” in **Hebrews 4:9-10** was “being entered” by the “ones believing” (Gr. *oi pisteusantes*, present tense) of **Hebrews 4:3**. In other words, the one who believes in Christ and becomes a Christian does (present tense) enter the **rest (or “Sabbath”)** God symbolized by the old Sabbath day (see also Matt. 11:28-30). Of course, the Christian’s present **rest** will some day be finally and ultimately consummated in the New heavens and new earth when he will cease from his labors (Rev. 14:13, etc.). That is why proper relationship to God for those of Isaiah’s day was expressed by proper attitude toward God’s Sabbath-day! It had to do with all that God was going to do in *salvation* and *redemption* in the Messiah and his kingdom (the church). Proper attitude and action toward God’s revealed will (in this case the Sabbath law) logically results in proper attitude and action toward the Person-hood of God. The more we cherish God’s word the more we will cherish God.

The more we luxuriate in God and his Word, the “higher” we will “ride!” The phrase, “...make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth...” symbolizes victory, conquest, dominion. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed (Lk. 17:5-6) we can do mighty, victorious, conquering things. Physical victory in this life was what the majority of the Jews anticipated from the glorious promises of their prophets (e.g. Isa. chs. 60-66). But God intended to give those who were faithful victory and dominion over sin and death through the Messiah. The “heritage of Jacob” was, of course, the birthright. The birthright was a physical thing that had to do with the perpetuation of the Hebrew family’s inheritance of land and goods through the eldest son. But it had as its ultimate goal the preservation of a people whose destiny was Messianic! The birthright was really a spiritual matter. It was to result in the redemption of the whole human race through a particular human family from a particular human nation. The promises of verse 14 may find a temporary fulfillment in the return of the Jews from the captivities, but like all other promises concerning the Jewish people and their land and their nation, **the ultimate fulfillment was in the “seed” (singular)—Gal. 3:16ff), the Christ and the New Israel (Gal. 6:16).** The redemption of man will be consummated when God restores man to the dominion man was given at creation which Christ earned for man (Heb. 2:5-18).

Judah and Jerusalem had been saved from her enemies when Hezekiah paid heed to Isaiah’s message from the Lord (see chs. 36-39). But now she has, through the leadership of the vilest king she has ever had, Manasseh (Hezekiah’s son), committed herself to a path of rebellion which will lead inexorably to God’s judgment and captivity. Undoubtedly, there were plain indications to the nation that it was in danger of foreign invasion and captivity. Manasseh was taken captive and imprisoned by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria in 673 B.C. It appeared that the whole nation would soon suffer the same fate. Whether the people were asking for Isaiah’s advice or not, he was giving it. He states **unequivocally** that they had **barricaded themselves** from God and he could not help them. The Lord has the power to save them from their enemies if they will turn to him and trust him. But as long as they choose idolatry and paganism, depend upon themselves and heathen allies for salvation, God cannot and will not help them. God made man and gave him the sovereignty of his own will. He gave man the awesome freedom to make his own sovereign choices with the attendant responsibility of the consequences of those choices. When man chooses to rebel against the revealed will of God, man willingly separates himself from God’s redeeming, saving power. Of course, man is never able to separate himself from God’s judgmental power. Men perish because they **refuse to love the truth** (2 Thess. 2:9-12). Men scoff and follow their own passions because they deliberately ignore God’s truths (2 Pet. 3:1-7). Men will not come to the light because they love darkness (John 3:19-21). Men do not come to God because they do not want to be shepherded by him (John 10:1-39). Men do not come to God because he tells them the truth and they had rather listen to the devil (John 8:39-47). When men build such walls of their own between themselves and God, his only alternative (in the light of man’s freedom to exercise his own sovereign will) is to give man up to a base mind and improper conduct (Rom. 1:18-32). When God is forced to give rebelling man up, man must save himself and man cannot do that! Man cannot save himself from nature, from death, from men more powerful than he, and last, but most important, man cannot save himself from his own conscience. **Sin separates the**

sinner from God because God is Absolutely Holy and Sinless and cannot tolerate sin or the unforgiven sinner in his presence! ONLY FORGIVEN SINNERS CAN BE BROUGHT BACK INTO THE PRESENCE OF AN ABSOLUTELY HOLY GOD!

Our sins testify against us to ourselves—to others—and to God! We know we are sinning—we can't help but know it—we even admit it. And the reason we know it is because we keep on crying to God to take away the *consequences* of our sins! WHEN “TRUTH HAS FALLEN (DEAD) IN THE PUBLIC SQUARES” (Isa. 59:14)—everyone must admit our sins are testifying against us! Isaiah 59:9-15 is an evaluation of Judah's predicament from the prophet's perspective. It is, as it were, Isaiah concurring with the Lord's indictment in 59:1-8. It cannot be a penitent confession of sin by the nation of Judah. The attitude of the populace grew *more and more rebellious and not penitent* as evidenced clearly by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah says, in effect, “Lord, You are correct! This nation is filled with confusion because of its sin.” The stupefying effect of the rejection of God's truth is seen in their clamoring, roaring, moaning for light and salvation while at the same time clamoring for more and more wickedness. They were like disoriented blind men groping, feeling, grasping for some object by which they might find their way. The way is there but they cannot see it. One is reminded of King Zedekiah who when faced with the consequences of his disobedience to God, sent for Jeremiah the prophet, and asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” (Jer. 37:17). Jeremiah had been preaching the “word from the Lord” for at least 23 years (Jer. 25:3). Why had Zedekiah been unable to find the way for 23 years? Why all of a sudden roar and moan for salvation? Because he had come to the “end of his rope.” He could no longer solve his problems by himself. Nation after nation has acted in the same stupid way—moaning for light while increasingly practicing darkness and roaring for salvation while continuing to enslave themselves with falsehood and wickedness. This senseless paradox fits certain segments of our own society and our own country. Some Americans run around roaring for “justice” while burning and looting and shedding innocent blood. Others moan for truth in politics and religion while cheating on their income tax, stealing their neighbor's wives, violating every law they can without getting caught. People want their sins but they do not want the consequences. Judah was no different from every other generation of mankind.

When the Lord saw the wickedness and lostness of Judah he also saw that there was no man interested or capable of petitioning him on their behalf. The Hebrew word *maphegi'a* is translated, “intervene” RSV and NIV. It means literally, *to strike upon or against*, or *to assail anyone with petitions*. In Ruth 1:16 it is translated, *urge, beg*. It is the word used in Jer. 7:16; 27:18; Job 21:15; Gen. 23:8; Isa. 53:12 (of the Suffering Servant) and in Jer. 36:25. They were all sinners, even Isaiah (“undone” Isa. 6:5). Who will intercede, who will stand between their wickedness and lostness and the just vengeance of Jehovah? **God will! God interposes himself in the Incarnate Suffering-Servant (the Son of God) (Isa. 45:32; 53:12; 54:9). God's own “Arm” brought salvation.** God upheld his own absolute faithfulness by imputing or supplying his righteousness to unrighteous man through the incarnated intercession of **himself!** God, himself, accomplished vindication of his justness and the justification of those who believe through the vicarious atonement of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). Hebrews 6:17-20 interpreted by the statement of Paul in 2 Cor. 1:20-22 teaches us that God “interposed

himself” as his “oath” to show us “more convincingly through two unchangeable (historical) things” that “it is impossible for god to prove false.”

Two Hebrew pronouns are side by side at the beginning of Isa. 59:21. They are ‘eni and zo’th and would read literally, “**I**, this very **One**,” am covenant for them. God interposed himself with an oath. He, himself became covenant. “All the promises of God find their **Amen** in him (Christ, God-incarnated)” (2 Cor. 1:20-21). Christ’s life, atoning death and justifying resurrection became the New Covenant (Matt. 26:26-29). To partake of Christ’s life is to partake of his Spirit (John 6:52-63). To partake of Christ’s word is to partake of his life and his Spirit (John 14:21-23; Acts 2:38; 5:32; 2 Pet. 1:3-5). The Spirit of Christ dwells in man through faith (Eph. 3:17) **and “faith comes by hearing and obeying the word of Christ”** (Rom. 10:17). The exclusiveness of the instrumentality of the Word in the dwelling and working of the Spirit is emphasized even here in Isaiah 59:21. The Spirit of God was in the prophets (1 Pet. 1:10-12), but the Spirit functioned through their preaching. The Spirit of God was in the apostles, but he functioned through their printing or preaching the Word which the apostles preached and printed and left for the salvation of the world. The apostolic message is the **only** message of the Spirit; he has no further word for the world! He will not function in the life of any one in the world *except* through the instrumentality of the apostolic Word. Covenant relationship to God has always been made available exclusively through the instrumentality of a revealed Word. God has always limited the initial delivery of His Word to a few selected individuals in order to preclude the possibility of deception (1 John 4:1-6). God has always authenticated these individuals (prophets and apostles) by signs and wonders (Heb. 2:1-4). Once these individuals have been authenticated and the message has been delivered in human language and committed to the printed page, anyone claiming to have a revelation of the Spirit beyond that message is a false messenger! All that is needed for the rest of the world to come into covenant relationship is that the completed, perfected message of the Spirit “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) through the apostolic word be passed on by printing or preaching from one generation to another. The covenant accomplished by the Redeemer and inscripturated by the Spirit will last forever. It will never need updating, changing or superceding. It will need simply to be passed on from generation to generation. It is for the whole world so long as the world shall last.

ISAIAH 60:1—62:12

Introduction

Isaiah makes it perfectly clear in this last section of his written prophecy that “**Zion**” is the **ultimate goal** of God. All of God’s working in the history of redemption is toward the “perfecting” of “**Zion.**” Everything in God’s great redemptive program is pointed toward the exaltation of “**Zion.**” The question is: **Who or What is “Zion”?**

There really can be little doubt, if we let the inspired writers of the New Testament give us the divine interpretation—“**Zion**” is the **New Testament Church**. Please note the following:

Jesus, quoting part of a section of Isaiah 28:16 (read this) in his parable of the wicked husbandmen and the vineyard (Matt. 21:33-46) applied Isaiah’s prophecy (which talks about “laying in Zion” a cornerstone) to the taking of the kingdom from the Jews and giving it to the whole world. Everyone accepts Jesus’ parable as a reference to the church. “Zion” is the NT church!

Paul, the apostle, applies “Zion” to the church in Rom. 9:33 and 11:26. Zion is the church.

Paul again makes it clear that “Zion” is the NT church as opposed to “Sinai” the OT law. Paul told the Christians in Hebrews 12:22 that they were **coming** to Mt. Zion (present tense Greek verb—not future) at the moment he was writing Hebrews—the place predicted in the prophets. Zion is the church.

In Rev. 14:1, the sovereign Christ is pictured as standing “on” Mt. Zion, which is symbolizing that Christ is at that time (during the Roman empire’s persecution—i.e., A.D. 100 to 500) protecting the church. Zion is the church. The kingdom and the church are one and the same entity—now, not future”

e. Col. 1:13 “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son”

f. Heb. 12:28 “Therefore let us be grateful for *receiving* (present active indicative participle in Greek) a kingdom that cannot be shaken.” That “kingdom” was being received when Paul wrote the book of Hebrews.

g. Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Rom. 14:17 “For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1 Thess. 2:12 “We exhorted each one of you...to lead a life worthy of God, who is calling (pres. act. participle *kalountos*, Greek) you into his own kingdom and glory.”

Matt 16:18-19 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...”

“ZION” AND THE “KINGDOM OF GOD” AND THE NT CHURCH ARE ONE AND THE SAME!

Some think Isaiah 60:1-14 may refer *initially* and *metaphorically* to the Jewish restoration after the exile, but it is doubtful that it does. However, the “light” that comes upon Zion is **definitely** the “glory” of Jehovah—and that cannot be anything less than the Messiah. Christ was the effulgence of the glory of God and bore the very image of his substance (Heb. 1:3). Jesus was the “Word of God” become flesh and men beheld his glory, glory as the **only begotten** (Gr. *monogenes*, or “only begotten” means, literally “**Unique-one-of-a-kind**”) from the Father (John 1:14). The “Word” was the life and the **light** of mankind (John 1:4). In the first 35 chapters of his book, Isaiah declared that Israel’s salvation was not in any human programs—in chapters 36-69 he inserts a parenthetical record of an historical event which demonstrates precisely what he is preaching—in chapters 40-66 Isaiah prophesies and typifies the grand climax of God’s program for the redemption of the whole world through the **Servant** and through **Covenant** relationship to God’s Suffering Servant. This last section (chapters 60-66) predicts the **glorious consequence** of **Zion’s** appropriation of the **Servant’s** work by **Covenant-communion**. The future glory of Zion is so certain (although centuries away) Isaiah speaks of it as if it had already come (i.e., “Arise, shine; for your light has come...”). The “glory” of God is the excellence of God’s character—holiness. Zion is to have the excellence of the character of Jehovah “rise” upon her. Commentators Kiel and Delitzsch point out: “The prophet, indeed, cannot describe even what belongs to the New Testament in any other than Old Testament colors, because he is still within the Old Testament limits.” In other words, Isaiah is depicting the **spiritual prosperity** of New Testament Zion (the church, Heb. 12:22ff) in terminology of his own times—(a) nations and kings coming to Zion’s brightness; (b) bringing gold and frankincense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord (e.g., the Magi with the baby Jesus); (c) offerings of Gentiles becoming acceptable to the Lord; (d) “sons” of Zion being brought from as far away as Tarshish—the end of civilization in that time; (e) foreigners “building the walls” of Zion—i.e., Gentiles “building” the church (cf. Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:16-17; Jer. 31:4-6; 33:7-26; Micah 7:11-17; Isa. 19:16-25; Eph. 2:11-22); (f) Zion’s “gates open continuously” metaphors for security and access; (g) many of Zion’s former enemies will become “priests” and “servants” in the New Zion. One very forceful reason for concluding the “Zion” here is the New Zion (the church of Christ) is that all who “will not

serve her shall perish.” Edward J. Young writes: “It is obvious that this prophecy does not fit the time of the restoration from exile...What nations at that time perished because they did not serve the empirical Zion?” There have been nations through the centuries, and there are nations now, not only refusing to serve literal Zion but making her serve them and they have not perished. Literal Zion as God’s dwelling place perished in A.D. 70 (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44). The place of God’s dwelling (New Zion) will be exalted above all that is on the earth—both of nature and men. It is going to be made glorious and preeminent. Everything in creation will be made available to glorify her (art, music, learning, literature, thoughts, emotions). New Zion will be the citadel of eternal safety!

In Isaiah 60:16 he states, “Thou (New Zion) shalt also suck the milk of the nations.” This is a graphic figure of speech to portray the New Zion as a hungry nursing child feeding on the choicest products of the nations of the whole world. New Zion (the church) has “fed” upon the sustenance of all the nations of the world (e.g., Augustine, Justin Martyr, Pascal, Michelangelo, Handel, Gladstone, Disraeli, Washington, Lincoln, Milton, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*). There have been millions and millions of “little” (non-famous) people, the “salt of the earth” people, the real jewels of each generation and nationality which have suckled at New Zion (the church of Christ). The fact that great and small, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, weak and powerful may come together in a kingdom of peace redounds to the glory and praise of God who created New Zion. God built New Zion from only the best of everything (gold, silver, bronze, iron, 60:17). There will be no inferior materials in building his New Dwelling place (the church). There will be no more need for human rulers in New Zion (human rulers were oppressive and inferior) because she shall be ruled by Peace and by Righteousness. In the church of Christ there are no positions of human rulership—only **servant-hood**. Elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers are **not** rulers—they are slaves, ruled over by the Prince of Peace and the King of Righteousness. The Hebrew word *Jeru-salem* is a compound word meaning, “righteousness-peace.” Important to the goodness New Zion is to have as her riches is **righteousness**. Citizens of New Zion are not belligerent; they do not retaliate (they leave justice to be done by the proper authority); they do not war and fight against one another (Matt. 5:7,9,21-26; 38-42; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 5:25-28; James 4:1-12; 1 Pet. 2:13-25). Citizens of new Zion have conformed their thinking and acting to the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and there is no violence in Zion. The New Zion is the only Zion of which this can be said. It certainly cannot apply to any literal, physical Zion or Jerusalem.

Some commentators think verses 19-20 refer to the heavenly consummation when heaven and earth shall have passed away and there is no more sun or moon (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). Isaiah does not actually state here that the sun and moon will be done away, but merely that it is no longer to give light to Zion by day. It is possible that this is merely a metaphorical way of predicting that all “light” (mental and moral illumination) except Divine Light will be excluded from the New Zion. The *menorah* (lamp-stand) in the OT tabernacle in which only the oil made according to divine formula could be burned *typified* the fact that in the Lord’s new dwelling place **only** Divine Light was to shine. Instructions concerning the tabernacle also prohibited the Jews from allowing sunlight, moonlight or any other light to shine inside the tent (John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).

The **gospel** is the **Light** (Acts 26:23; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; 2 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:5,7; 2:9, etc.) and the **only Light** that is to illuminate the New Zion (the church). God's New City—New Zion—the church, will be changed from a physical, geographical Zion which has a physical sun to a **spiritual, universal Zion which will have a Spiritual-Divine Light**.

The “me” of 61:1 can be none other than the **Servant-Messiah** of Jehovah. We have divine verification of that by the **Servant**, himself, in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:21). Isaiah is here predicting the coming of the Holy Spirit of God in the Person of the Messiah. Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2 and applied it directly to his own incarnate ministry. When Jesus said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears,” Luke used the Greek **perfect tense verb**, *peplerotai*, which would read literally, “Today has this been fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled in your ears.” In other words, from the moment Jesus was born until the Christian dispensation shall close and the gospel shall cease to be preached, what Isaiah wrote in 61:1-2ff is being fulfilled. The **Servant-Messiah** is the source of it all. The Hebrew text here reads, *ruach adonay yehoih*, literally, “Spirit of Lord Jehovah.” This is a combination of the characteristics of God—Judge/Master/Covenant-Revealer was the *ruach* (Spirit) which was upon Jesus Christ. God gave his Spirit to Jesus without measure (John 3:34). The reason Jesus needed this full anointing of the Godhead was his mission to a world of rebel prisoners enslaved by a supernatural devil. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) so that in Jesus dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 1:19; 2:9). To anoint (the Hebrew word *mashah* is “anoint” and is the word from which we get “Messiah”) meant to crown as king—to give authority. Jesus’ authority to proclaim “good tidings from heaven” was demonstrated by the miracles and signs confirming his deity. He demonstrated he had authority on earth to forgive sins by making the lame to walk and giving sight to the blind and raising the dead to life.

The Hebrew word *zarim* is translated “strangers” RSV and “aliens” NIV. It means “loathed-ones, barbarians, enemies, excluded-ones.” *Ben nekar* is translated “foreigners” in both RSV & NIV and literally is “sons of foreigners.” When the **Messiah-Servant** came loudly crying the time of the Messianic Jubilee (the time of the Lord’s pleasure). Those who had been **excluded, alienated** from covenant relationship to Jehovah were to be given an invitation to join the chosen people in serving and ministering to him (see Eph. 2:11-22). In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus apparently closed the scroll of Isaiah before he read beyond verses 1 and 2 of this chapter. He did not read the verses now under consideration, but he implied them in his reference to the mercy shown by God to two Gentiles (Luke 4:23-27) in the remainder of his sermon. Isaiah’s book is replete with predictions that the “nations” (Heb. *goyim*, “Gentiles”) will be included in the Messianic age as God’s people (Isa. 2:1-4; 19:23-25; 25:6-12; 56:6-8; 60:10,14, etc.). The Hebrew words *heyl goiym* in 61:6 could be translated “host” or “army of the Gentiles” but is translated “wealth of nations” in RSV and NIV. The wealth or riches of any nation is not its gold or diamonds, but its **people**. It is the character of the people that make any nation what it is. God predicts through his prophets that the future “Israel” or the “New Zion” (the NT church) will **“feed on”** the best of all nations (cf. Obadiah 17,21; Micah 7:11-17; Zech. 14:16-21; Isa. 19:16-25; 60:10-18; 66:12-21). Many of those who came into the NT church were not what most nations would consider

their best (1 Cor. 1:26-31), but they were people who could repent and be made into the image of Christ and were really the jewels of creation (cf. Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19-20).

The world would some day, long after Isaiah's day, acknowledge that God's people, "Zion," was a victorious, glorious, rejoicing people! God's people will one day rejoice because they will be made famous. The reason they shall be made famous, however, will not be due to their own merit but because God, the Creator, has given them **victory over the world, the flesh and the devil** in a **New** Covenant relationship—the New Zion (the church of Christ) will be renowned! The "seed" and "offspring" of New Zion will be renowned among the nations. The people of the Messiah (Christians) were known throughout the Roman world of the first century (and ever after) for their faith, obedience to God and love of their fellow man (Acts 2:47; 4:13,33; Rom 16:19; 1 Thess. 1:8-10; Philemon 4-7; 1 Pet. 4:4). Pliny the younger wrote "the believers met regularly early in the morning to worship Christ as a divinity. They insisted on a strict code of ethics; to abstain from fraud, theft, and adultery, never to lie, nor to default on an obligation. At the end of the assembly they ate a common meal and then adjourned." John Noble (prisoner of the USSR for 12 years) received the admiration and respect of the Communist prison guards for his Christian life. Isaiah means to stress how different the people of the Messiah will be from the heathen-behavior of the Judah of his day or the paganism of the world in general (cf. John 13:35). The goodness and blessedness and joy of the lives of the citizens of New Zion will be acknowledged (perhaps even grudgingly respected) by the whole world. The Messiah's people are "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). In 61:10, New Zion is predicted as rejoicing in the Lord because the Lord has clothed her in salvation and righteousness. The church of Christ is all dressed up like someone waiting for a wedding (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:6-10). The people of the Messiah partake of the glory of the Messiah by being made partakers of his nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4) which is done by abiding in his word (John 15:1-11). New Zion partakes of her King's nature gradually, progressively, "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:17-18). New Zion (the church) must never forget that her beauty is relative to and dependent upon partaking of her Lord's righteousness and salvation. New Zion has no beauty of her own. She is clothed by Someone else! So all her boasting or rejoicing is directed to the Source of her glory (1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14-16).

What God is going to do in glorifying Zion, the whole world shall see (62:1-5). And it shall be so totally different from what Zion has been before she shall have to be called by a **new name**. Everything about her will be new; old terminology will be inadequate. This wholly **new Zion** is predicted by other prophets (Jer. 3:15-17; 33:16; Ezek. 48:35). This prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled when God's **New** Covenant people began to be called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). "Christians" literally in Greek (*Christos*, "anointed") would be "Anointed-ones" or in Hebrew they would be "Messiahians" (to coin a word). It was fitting that those "married" to Christ should be called "Christians" (John 3:31-36; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 19:6-8; 21:2; 22:17). The Hebrew word *shem* is the word for "name." It means literally, "a mark, fame, reputation, monument." God was going to do something so radical to Zion she would henceforth be distinguished by a completely new **mark**! She would have a "new" commandment and live by a "new" love (John 13:34-35). Of course, there were many names by which New Covenant believers were

known, e.g., “the Way” (Acts 24:14), “saints” (1 Cor. 1:2), “brethren” (Gal. 1:2), “church of God” (1 Cor. 1:1-2) and others. The crown of beauty (62:3) is not on the head of God but in his hand. Zion, the church, is a work of his hands and he now beholds the work which contributes to the glory that is already his. The “woman” (Rev. 12:1-2) which we take to represent the faithful covenant people of God (in both Old and New Testaments) has a crown upon her head. The church is the “crowning” accomplishment of God through the redemption of the Son. Re-creation glorifies God even more than creation! The point of the name-change appears to be focused on the changed relationship of God toward his people. He will no longer call them *‘ezuvah* (“Forsaken”) or *shemamah* (“Desolate”). God will eventually call his people *khephzi-bah* (“My Delight is in Her”) and *be’ulah* (“Married”). These name-changes may have initial application to God’s redemption of Judah from Babylonian captivity. However, their ultimate goal is the changed relationship in the New Zion (the Messianic kingdom-church). One is reminded here of Hosea’s prophecy of changed relationships and changed names (Hosea 1:8—2:1; 2:14-23). Hosea’s prediction definitely found its fulfillment in the New Covenant church of Christ (**Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10**). It may be of interest to know that the Hebrew word *be’ulah* (“married”) comes from the root word *ba’al* which means, “to have dominion, to be lord over, to possess.” The emphasis on marriage as descriptive of the new relationship stresses the fact that God’s concern for his people is not of mere duty; it is deeper than that—it is **love**. Just as a young man eagerly possesses (“marries”) his bride, so Jehovah-God will join himself intimately to his people. He makes a covenant of **love** with his bride (the church) to protect her, sustain her, live with her and give her the honor of his **name**. He will lavish upon her the best of everything he has—even his own Son to atone for her sins.

Isaiah first declares the New Zion will have “faithful watchmen.” **Prophets** (i.e., spokesmen for God) were commissioned by God as “watchmen” in the OT (Ezek. 3:17; 33:1-9; Isa. 21:6,11,12; 52:8; 56:10; Jer. 6:17; 31:6; 51:2; Hosea 9:8; Micah 7:4 etc.). The New Zion will have “watchmen” (“apostles, pastors, evangelists, teachers”) who will be **alert**—not sleeping like the “dumb-dog-watchmen” of Isaiah’s day (Isa. 56:10). The “watchmen” of New Zion will declare the whole counsel of God, night and day, with tears (Acts 20:17-35); they will be faithful preachers-evangelists for the Lord (Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus)—not like the self-serving, false teaching, “false prophets” of Isaiah’s day. The Lord allowed Judah’s enemies to plunder the land. Specifically, Assyria and Babylon invaded Palestine and looted harvest field and city shops. Even the temple was ravaged by Babylon and its vessels carried off. Israel’s inheritance was wrested from her. But it shall not be so with New Zion. Her inheritance is **incorruptible and eternal—one that does not fade away (1 Pet. 1:3-5)**. Nothing in the seen or unseen world can separate New Zion from her inheritance (Rom. 8:31-39). Ancient Zion’s glory was transient, but New Zion’s glory is eternal (2 Cor. 4:16—5:5). Once again Isaiah puts New Zion’s future glory in terminology comprehensible to ancient Zion (i.e., in agricultural terms). **New Zion will enjoy the constant presence of the Lord. She “eats and drinks” at the Lord’s Table. She has been invited to a feast for her soul/spirit (Isa. 25:6-12; Luke 14:1-35; John 6:35-65, etc.)**. NEW ZION WILL FEED ON THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST’S REDEMPITIVE WORK FOR THEIR SOULS!

First God wants people **separated** from worldliness (not from the world—but from a world-mind-set). The admonition to Judah from Isaiah (62:10-11) is that she prepare to separate herself from idolatrous paganism in order that she may become the remnant through which Jehovah will build New Zion (the redeemed, Messianic church of Christ). Judah was about to go into captivity, surrounded by idolatry and the pagan way of life in her own land with which she had become so enamored. She will face tremendous temptations down in Babylon to become “worldly.” She may even be tempted to stay in Babylon when the times comes for her to return to Palestine and renew the Jewish commonwealth (many millions of Jews did—only a little over 50,000 returned with Ezra and Zerubbabel). God had placed the Hebrew people in Palestine so they might be a **sign and a witness to all the heathen world around them of the Only Righteous, Omnipotent, True God—Jehovah (Ex. 19:5-6; Ezek. 5:5ff)**. Israel was to be *masas* (Heb. for “ensign”) or standard, flag, banner, sign, token, by which the world was to be attracted to her God. But she “showed pirate colors”—she demonstrated more paganism than the pagans (Ezek. 5:5ff; Jer. 18:13, etc.). Now the Lord is calling her back to her divine mission and predicting that there will be a “remnant” who will choose to fulfill the mission and eventually form New Zion (the church) which will draw people from all nations to her. Jehovah will accomplish Zion’s redemption (62:11). God himself will pay the price. He will conquer her most powerful enemies—sin and death (in the Messiah). **First**, Zion must exercise her will and accept that salvation by faith, repentance and obedience to the covenant terms. Repentance and faith require an obedient turning away from sin, **separating** oneself deliberately and willingly from all that God prohibits and living deliberately and willingly according to what God commands. Covenant terms for New Zion involves obedience in baptism (immersion in water), Acts 2:38; 8:12-13; 8:38-39; 10:47; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21, etc.). Zion is also to announce to the world the proclamation that God has accomplished salvation. With acceptance of God’s proffered salvation comes the rewards of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3; 2:6). With rejection of God’s proffered salvation comes the recompense of judgment (2 Thess 1:8-9). **Second**, when Zion separates herself from paganism and accepts the Lord’s salvation, she shall be **acknowledged** as **holy**. It will be apparent to the whole world that she is dedicated, set apart, sanctified, and belongs to the Lord of Glory, author of Life and Righteousness. This is what the church of Christ is for—a testimony of the **Holy God**. She is to fulfill what God intended for Israel (Ex. 19:6). The world is to acknowledge that members of New Zion consider themselves **purchased** (redeemed) by Almighty God. Zion is to testify that her citizenship is in heaven and that she has no abiding place here (Heb. 11:13-16; 13:39-40)—she is a city of sojourners whose destiny is the Eternal Jerusalem where God dwells forever and ever.

ISAIAH 63:1—66:24

Introduction

Isaiah has been predicting staggering, mind-boggling things for God's covenant people. All through his ministry he speaks of a future where there will be prosperity, wealth, and power over those who oppose them, resulting in peace and security for "Zion." He talks about a great Leader from the family of David who will rule in justice and righteousness. From what Isaiah says, the future for Zion is much more glorious than the "golden age" when David and Solomon ruled Israel.

In Isaiah, chapters 63-64 (especially 63:15—64:12) the prophet's contemporaries can no longer contain themselves—they insist that God deliver, "right-now," on his promises. "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down." Man is always trying to run ahead of God.

What God, through Isaiah, was intending to predict for those with faith to accept it was a change in the **nature and personality of mankind**. God was going to make it possible for the Divine image to be restored to mankind. Even a rebuilt Garden of Eden would be of no value to unregenerated people—they would turn it right back into a cursed place again.

What the reader of Isaiah must remember is that Isaiah had to write (and speak) to the people of his day in the human-language terminology they used in life there and then. He could not literally predict for them, in their terminology, what the Messianic age, 700 years later, would be. Especially, Isaiah could not get the "spiritual-kindergarten-kids" of the Old Testament to understand **spiritual-graduate-level** things about the coming Messianic age. They still thought of God as having a literal "house" (the tabernacle and temple); of a specially-ordained priesthood; of animal sacrifices for their sins, etc. etc. SO HE HAD TO DESCRIBE THE "UNSEEN" BY THE "SEEN."

So, in chapter 65 Isaiah describes *metaphorically* the refining, regenerating process God is going to initiate and thus produce this "New Zion"—in chapter 66 the prophet predicts (a) the burial of old Zion; (b) the birth of New Zion; (c) the building of the ultimate Zion.

Men have not been much different, through the ages, from those in Isaiah's day. Jesus had to deal with the Jewish insistence that the kingdom of God was primarily a change of worldly circumstances. He kept preaching that it was primarily **changed people**. Even the apostles themselves kept wanting an earthly Utopia. What about you? Is your primary anticipation of the "kingdom" pearly gates and golden streets (literally)—or is it mainly anticipation of your ultimate, final transformation into the image of Christ—forever and ever!

The unrecognizable figure coming from Edom is Jehovah-God. He has been “tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath were stored.” He is coming from Edom because he has made judgment upon Edom. The Edomites were inveterate enemies of Israel (Obadiah 1-14; Isa. 34:5-15; Ezek. 35:1-15). Edom is often mentioned as **typical** or **representative** of **all** the ungodly powers that oppose Jehovah’s redemptive work through Israel. The “picture” Isaiah is painting here is that of Jehovah’s judgment upon **all** that opposes his Messianic program of redemption. The garments of the One approaching are splattered with **red** like a man who has just come from tramping in the wine-vat and has splattered red grape juice all over his clothing. This red is the “lifeblood” of his enemies (63:3; see also Rev. 19:13). Lest someone get the idea that Edom’s downfall (and that of any other nation) is a matter of chance, or that it might have been averted if other circumstances had fallen just right, Jehovah emphasizes that he **alone** brought it about. The emphasis of the whole passage (63:1-9) is that Jehovah is **emanate in, and personally**, responsible for the deliverance, salvation and redemption of Zion—even to the destruction of her enemies (see Isa. 59:16). There “was no one to help him” so his own “Arm” (i.e., the Son, the Messiah) carried out the plan of redemption according to his own righteous pleasure. The “year” of his “Redeeming One” comes precisely according to his timetable (cf. Isa. 61:1 with Lk. 4:16-27). The Lord sets times and seasons (Dan. 2:20-23); he deposes and sets up kings and kingdoms to fit his own plans (Dan. 5:18-21); he has a definite time schedule for the Messianic nation to bring forth the Messiah (Dan. 9:24-27; Gal. 4:4). He needs no assistance for he uses his own “ARM” (Isa. 40:10; 51:5; 52:10; 53:1). Zion, through the prophet Isaiah, is exhorted to rejoice in Jehovah’s judgment of Zion’s enemies (63:7-9). A part of Jehovah’s redemption and regeneration of Zion and re-creating her in his own righteous image is that those who are redeemed shall hate evil and love good (Isa. 1:16-17; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; Heb. 1:9) just like God does. Heaven and the saints are told to rejoice over the fact that God destroyed the “harlot,” “Babylon” (the city of Rome and the Roman empire) with blood, war pestilence, fire, destruction and torments (Rev. Chs. 17-18, esp. Rev. 18:20 and 19:1-8). A person who cannot hate evil, cannot love good! The uniqueness of Jesus’ fleshly nature was that as a man he “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (Heb. 1:9) and thus was the Perfect Man.

Although the Lord has given the prophet a vision of his power and faithfulness to destroy Zion’s enemies and uphold her when she trusts him (63:1-9), Zion seems bent on *not* believing and acting upon it (63:10-14). Therefore the Lord is going to give Zion over to humiliation and destruction and captivity (63:15-19). The Hebrew word *maru* is translated **rebel** (63:10) and is the strongest word for that circumstance, meaning literally, **to revolt**. Their **revolt** pained or “sorrowed” the Holy Spirit of God. Israelites had rebelled against God from the time they left Egypt (Ex. 17:1ff; 32:1ff; Heb. 3:7-19), and they continued their rebellion until God finally took them out of their land and into captivity. The third Person of the Godhead (the Holy Spirit of God) was actively involved in the program of redemption in the Old Testament (63:11). Isaiah tells his people that with the downfall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, Zion (the faithful remnant) will “remember” and pray for a return of the Holy Spirit of God in power and deliverance as he did through Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea. The phrase, “Where is he that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them?” (63:11) is interesting and perhaps should give us pause to rethink our concept of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

age. The Hebrew word *kerev* is translated midst; the usual word for midst is *tok*. *Kerev* is unique and means, “**inward part, inwards, bowels**” hence, “the heart.” *Kerev* is the word in 1 Kings 17:22 where “the soul of the child came *“into him again..”* Did God’s Spirit dwell in the believers of the OT? Could it be that God put his Holy Spirit in the “hearts” of the people as he was leading them in the exodus from Egypt—and there they grieved him? One NT passage appears to preclude the possibility of the Spirit dwelling in OT believers. John notes, “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:39). Note, however, the word *given* (in Jn. 7:39) is a **supplied word**—it is not in the Greek text! Does this indicate that the Spirit was not yet for *everyone* who believes (meaning Gentiles)? Or does it mean that the Spirit was *not yet given at all* (not even for Jews) until after Jesus was glorified? The latter has been the traditional interpretation. If the latter interpretation is to be followed, what is one to do with the apostle Paul’s clear statement that, “if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his...and if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through the Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:9-11)? If eternal life and resurrection from the dead necessitates the Spirit of God dwelling in man, and if the Spirit was **not** given at all until Christ was glorified, how do we account for the eternal life apparently granted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28; 16:23, etc.). How could Abraham be justified by faith without receiving the Spirit of God also by faith (Rom. 4:2-9; Gal 3:6-7; Jas. 23:23)? How could the beggar be borne to Abraham’s bosom if the beggar did not have the Spirit of God (Luke 16:22)? How could Moses and Elijah be transfigured with Christ in glorified appearance without having the Spirit of God in them (Matt. 17:1-5; Luke 9:30-31)? The only resolution of this *apparent* dilemma is to recognize that the Spirit of God was certainly **in** people of the OT (e.g. Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David and the prophets and all “faithful” believers in God-Jehovah, cf. Num. 27:18; Psa. 51:11; 143:10). Rotherham says on Psa. 51:11: “David...had enjoyed the presence of the Holy Spirit he could not have prayed, *Take it not from me*. Was that Spirit, not hallowing, as well as illuminating and revealing? Can we really enter into the undercurrent of this psalm, without perceiving that a hallowing (i.e., indwelling) Divine *Presence* had lain at the roots of the writer’s spiritual life...By how much soever this is clear, by so much also must it be clear that the Evangelist (John) spoke **comparatively** when he said (Jn. 7:39) that the Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified.” (*Studies In The Psalms, Vol. I*, by J. B. Rotherham, pub. College Press, p. 352). We submit that the message of Jesus (Jn. 7:39) was that the Spirit of God was **not come in his fulness** until Jesus was glorified and redemption was completed. After the redemptive work of God was completed through the Son, the indwelling presence of the Spirit would give man a **greater**, more strengthening participation in the inheritance God had stored up for believers. The point of Isaiah’s message (63:10-14) is to portray the frustration of the people of his day over the impending captivity. It appears to them as if God’s Spirit has deserted them and that God himself does not care that his name will be debased if he does not save them as he saved their ancestors. Could the Holy Spirit *indwell* believers in a dispensationally-graduating fulness? We think the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit’s indwelling was: (a) in the OT in a “good” measure (Psa. 51:11; 143:10, etc.); (b) to mankind through the Incarnate Son in a “better” measure (John 14:17, etc.); (c) in the glorified Christ and those who believe in him in the “best” measure (John 16:7; Acts 2:33, etc.).

The “disciples” of Isaiah felt Jehovah was so utterly transcendent, dwelling in such absolute holiness (separation from this world) that he was disowning his creatures. Their petition was that God would look down from his high and lofty place and given attention to their predicament. While God had guided and sustained their ancestors with miraculous interventions in history, from Noah to their own day, it suddenly appeared (in the captivities) that Jehovah had deliberately *restrained* (withdrawn) his zeal and love for their nation. Their accusation was based upon their carnal concept of what their need was and their carnal ideas as to how God should act toward them. They believed their imperative need was to be delivered from those who would take them into captivity. God has not disowned his people. He is about to demonstrate through the captivity, just how much he owns them. The child who is not chastened has no real father (Heb. 12:1-11). So, our Father-child relationship to God depends upon our perspective. These people of Judah could not look upon their impending captivity as the chastening of a loving Father (which is what it was revealed to be by Hosea, Isaiah, and a host of other prophets). They looked at it through carnal eyes, not eyes of faith. Looking thus, they charged God with desertion! Their *complaint* in 63:17-19 begins to turn toward a cry of *desperation* which leads to a confession. Now God has them (a faithful remnant—Isaiah’s “disciples”) where he wants them! The last section of the petition of Zion (64:8-12), born of her restlessness and helplessness, is a plea for Jehovah to verify his relationship to her. Before we thank God that we are not like those people, let us remember that we have undoubtedly been as arrogant and then as helpless as they at one time or another in our Christian walk. All of us have tried, with Peter, to walk on the stormy sea of life by ourselves at one time or another; all of us have probably cried out as we began to sink, “Lord save me!” (Matt. 14:29-31). But actually, this is where God wants us! This is where he wanted Zion! He could not save them until they allowed him to do so. Of course, most of us want him to save us right now, and according to our human program. But Jehovah is not only omnipotent, he is omniscient. *His* knowledge of what we need and when we need it is *perfect*. He is indeed our Perfect Father.

It may have appeared up to this point in Isaiah’s prophecy that he was pronouncing doom upon the **whole** nation. However, the prayer in chapter 64 shows that there was a small remnant of people who had turned to the Lord for help. This small group had the testimony of Isaiah “bound up and sealed” among them and were the prophets’ “disciples” (Isa. 8:16-20). They had turned “to the teaching and to the testimony.” Chapter 65 is the verification that Isaiah had been declaring all along the **whole** nation was **not** to be doomed but that there would be a sifting and God would indeed answer the prayer for deliverance by the “remnant.” Those who blaspheme the Lord will be recompensed with judgment; those who trust the Lord will become a “seed” and provide heirs to Judah’s promises. The apostle Paul helps us understand that these final verses of Isaiah’s book have to do with the Messiah’s kingdom (the church) for he quotes 65:1-2 in Romans 10:20-21 as fulfilled at the preaching of the gospel and its reception by Gentiles. Isaiah is predicting that a refining, sorting, culling process is going to take place as a consequence of the Babylonian captivity and the subsequent centuries of God’s “indignation” (see Dan. 8:19; 9:1-27; 10:14; 11:35; 12:1-13, etc.). From the Babylonian captivity, through the restoration of the Jews, through the Seleucid (Syrian) domination and the Maccabean revolt, and through the early Roman domination, the

Jewish nation would undergo a **spiritual sifting** until thoroughly prepared (with a remnant of godly servants like Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples) for the **new creation (Isa. 66:18-24—the church of Christ)**. Isaiah 65:1 substantiates Ephesians 3:1-6 that God did not in ancient times make known to the Gentiles the Messianic program as he did to the Jews. But Isaiah 65:1 predicts a time when the Gentiles **would find** God—they will “behold” him (through the preaching of the gospel Rom. 10:14-21) and will be called by his name. But until the time comes for God to open the Messianic kingdom to the Gentiles, he “spreads out his hands all the day to a rebellious people.” The Hebrew nation was begun at the exodus with approximately 2,500,000 people. After its “purging and sifting” through Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian captivities, it was begun again under Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel with about 50,000 people. That is about a two per-cent remnant! With those statistics in mind it is a testimony to the power of God that he brings forth a “seed out of Jacob (65:9) and re-plants it in Palestine and it shall produce “servants” to inherit the spiritual blessings to come through the Messianic kingdom (the NT church). Out of the “valley of Achor” (i.e., Hebrew language “Achor” means “trouble”) shall come “hope” (see Hosea 1:15). Out of their captivities shall come Messianic hope. The restful, prosperous pastoral scene (65:8-10) is metaphorical (figurative) of the **spiritual** rest and prosperity that will be inherited by the people of the Good Shepherd (Ezek. 34:1-31; Jer. 33:14-26; H.s 3:5; Joel 3:1-3; Amos 9:11-15; Obad. 17-21; Micah 5:2-4; Zeph. 3:9-20; Zech. 12:1—14:21; Matt. 11:28-30; John 10:1-18).

No! The whole world does not reject “the blood stained One” (see Isa. 63). Continuing the idea of a refined Zion and the metaphor between the “good grapes and the bad grapes” the Lord now pictures the different consequences of the refining process. Those, even of the Gentiles (“nations”) who do find him and call upon his name and become obedient servants, he will fill with spiritual nutrition, growth and satisfaction. Isaiah is, of course, “coloring” his language to fit the times of his contemporaries (700 B.C.) to write of future **spiritual** things in physical terminology. The New Covenant scriptures make it plain that God’s richest blessings are **spiritual** (Eph. 1:3, etc.). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled (Matt. 5:6); those who hunger for the Bread of Life shall have it (J9ohn 6:52-65); those who thirst for the Water of Life shall be quenched (John 4:13; 7:37-39); those who desire joy shall have it abundantly (John 15:1-11). The kingdom of God was, is, and shall always be essentially **character**, not food and drink (i.e., physical things) (Rom. 14:17). Those who rebel and disobey will find their souls and spirits starving and dying of spiritual malnourishment. They will suffer sorrow and vexation (Amos 8:11-12). There is no torture more excruciating than spiritual torture (Luke 16:24-31)—and no joy greater than spiritual joy. Those of the chosen nation who rebelled against their Messianic destiny left their name to the world for a curse. God promised old Israel she would become a **proverb and a byword** among the nations if she was disobedient (Det. 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chron. 7:20; Psa. 44:14). The Jewish nation became the chief illustration for Christians of the consequences of rebelling against the Lord (Matt. 21:33-42; 22:1-10; Luke 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 3:1—4:13, etc.). The Lord was going to slay the old Israel and create a **New Israel** (Gal. 6:15-16). The Lord delivered the death blow to the former Israel when he canceled her covenant and nailed it to the cross of Christ. It was definitely prophesied that God would do away with the election of physical Israel

(Jer. 3:15-18; 31:31-34). Isaiah 65:13-16 clearly shows that the genetic nation of Israel as such is not synonymous with God's chosen (cf. also Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-13, etc.). In light of this precise statement that God is going to slay the disobedient nation and call his servants by another name, what scriptural reason is there for expecting a future resurrection of genetic Israel? None! Ezekiel ch. 37 undoubtedly refers *initially* to the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C.—but ultimately to the “resurrection” of a New Covenant people in the NT church. Certainly the physical nation of Judah restored in 536 B.C. cannot be the **ultimate fulfillment** of Isaiah 65:13-16—neither can the present day Israel! All that is false and standing against man was forever conquered and eliminated through the Son of God. The power, the guilt and the penalty of man's rebellion was atoned for and **the God of Truth**, Who is Ultimate, Saving Truth, redeemed those who are willing and obedient. This is the new and refined Zion!

Out of those of Isaiah's day who trusted in Jehovah, God was going to “create a new heaven and earth” (i.e., a new kingdom—the church). In 65:16 Isaiah promised New Zion that “the former troubles are forgotten.” Now the prophet shows why that is so—Jehovah is going to create an entirely **new order**. The Hebrew verb *bara*, translated “create,” is used in the Hebrew *qal* stem only with God as the subject, because it means bringing into existence something *absolutely new*. This “new creation” is not speaking of a literal, physical new heavens and earth, but of a new era, a new age, or a new order in which God will create his **spiritual** kingdom on the present earth. Edward J. Young says it correctly: “Heaven and earth are employed as figures to indicate a complete renovation or revolution in the existing course of affairs.” It is the **new Jerusalem**, the **new covenant**, and the old will not be remembered (Jer. 3:15-17) or made again. In Hebrews 2:5-9 we are told that Christ came to restore man to the dominion over “the world to come” which man lost when he sinned in Eden. God cursed that creation of Eden because of man's sin. But Jesus, partaking of human nature, conquered sin in the flesh and has potentially given man's dominion back to him. This was done at the **first advent of Christ** (not the second). What God has done by Christ's redemptive work and establishment of the church is, therefore, the new creation. Hebrews 12:27 indicates that the *old order (the OT)* was “shaken” (brought down) “in order that what cannot be shaken may remain.” That which “cannot be shaken” is the **new order** or the kingdom of Christ (Heb. 12:28) which is the church—or as the writer of Hebrews puts it, “Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...the assembly of the first-born” (Heb. 12:22-23). The apostle Paul says clearly that the **New covenant relationship (i.e., the church of Christ) IS NOW the new creation** (2 Cor. 5:16-21; Gal. 6:15-16). In this text Isaiah says that those who will be “newly created” by faith and obedience to God will be **immortal** (65:20) while the rebel and sinner will also live forever in accursedness; those of faith will **prosper** spiritually, produce righteous fruit, be secure and satisfied (65:21-23); those who trust the Lord will have immediate and eternal **access** to God (65:24); and they will **not be hurt** (with a lasting hurt) in God's “holy mountain” (Zion, Heb. 12:22), for in the place where God dwells, there will be peace, joy and festivity (65:25). This is a metaphorical picture (“times coloring” terminology) of the coming Messianic kingdom made especially for Isaiah's “disciples.”

Chapter 66 contains a 3-part summarization of the whole book of Isaiah. First there is capsulizing of the abomination of Isaiah's contemporaries and the coming judgment upon the nations of Israel & Judah (66:1-6); second, the birth of new Israel (the Messianic age—the church) (66:7-14); and finally, the proclamation of redemption to the whole world (66:15-24). These are the 3 major theses of the prophet in his whole book and thus chapter 66 forms an appropriate *epilogue*. Isaiah 66:1-3 are not condemnations of houses of worship, *per se*, nor were they intended to abrogate animal sacrifices for Isaiah's contemporaries. Not until the New Covenant was instituted on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2, did animal sacrifices become obsolete. The prophet **is** condemning the arrogant hypocrisy of those who thought an earthly temple guaranteed the presence of Jehovah as the Jews believed it did (Jer. 7:1-15). Many of the Jews fell into the dangerous self-induced delusion that as long as their temple stood God **must** confine himself there and, thus, their nation would never be without his presence and protection. This delusion is a consequence of spiritual immaturity and "this-world-mindedness" about the worship of God. Most of the Jewish rulers and religious leaders of Jesus' day trusted in their earthly temple, human priesthood and animal sacrifices, but not in the Invisible God who made them. It is a common failure of human nature to demand that which can be "handled, touched and tasted" (Col. 2:20-23; 2 Cor. 4:16—5:5). When the Pharisees of Jesus' day wanted to make an oath by the highest thing they could think of, they made it on the temple or the gold of the temple (Matt. 23:16-21). When Jesus predicted the desolation of the city and the temple (Matt. 23:37-39) his own disciples could not believe it, so he gave an extended lesson to them about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Matt. 24:1-35). The fundamental issue of the entire book of Hebrews in the NT is that of "weaning" Hebrew-Christians away from the powerful temptation to return to Judaism (abrogated by the New Covenant) which appealed to the fleshly desire for a religion that centered in an earthly temple, touchable sacrifices, visible high-priesthood and religious hierarchy. Stephen, the martyr, condemned his Jewish brethren for not accepting the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the temple stood for (Acts 7:44-53). The Lord **does dwell** in a spiritual temple composed of believing, obeying people (Eph. 2:11-22; 2 Pet. 2:5). **But the people of Isaiah's day (for the most part) were unbelieving, disobedient people who had been blessed above all the other nations of the world with the Word of God and the miraculous deliverance of God many times. What choice do such people leave a Righteous and Just God when they *delight* in their abominations?** The only choice God has is to leave them to their choice! Abomination! God chooses their delusions as the instruments of their judgment. When God called and called, none were poor enough in spirit to answer. When God spake, none obeyed. They plainly told God they did not want to hear from him (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; Micah 2:6-11). The obstinately chose their own way against God's way (Jer. 6:16-18; 8:4-7). They are given up to suffer in their own bodies the due penalties of their errors (Rom. 1:27). Judah trusted in human schemes and human allies to keep her safe and prosperous, but her human allies betrayed her and turned on her and destroyed her. Judah's social injustices and political chicanery on the international scene eventually caused her captivity. But it was Jehovah who was exercising his sovereign rule in righteousness over the universe that was the real cause of it. God exercises his sovereign rule through secondary agents both in men and natural means (Isa. 10:5-19; Jer. 27:1-11; Amos 4:6-11; Hab. 1:5-6; Dan. 8:1ff; Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1—9:21; 17:15-18, etc.). The majority of the people of Isaiah's day **hated** the righteous remnant. God's righteous minority will always be

persecuted by the wicked majority because their righteousness acts as a catalyst of judgment in their midst (John 3:18-21; 9:35-40; 15:18-27). The righteous minority of Isaiah's day had been "cast out"—ostracized socially, religiously economically and politically. As for those of Isaiah's day who were persecuting the righteous, they would themselves be cast out and suffer shame and humiliation for their disobedience to God in the Babylonian captivity. **But Isaiah is looking past his own time by many centuries and hears the noise of warfare that comes from Jerusalem, the city that the wicked majority believed would never fall (Micah 3:11; Jer. 6:13-14; 8:11; 26:7-11; 28:1-17).** ISAIAH'S PREDICTION OF JERUSALEM'S JUDGMENT HERE REFERS **ULTIMATELY** TO HER **FALL** AT THE HANDS OF ROME (A.D. 70) AND **ESPECIALLY** TO THE **ABROGATION** OF THE OLD COVENANT (HEB. 8:13; 12:25-29).

God is going to give birth to a "New land and nation" (i.e., New Zion) WITH ONE STROKE, IN ONE DAY! That the pain and travail of 66:6 predicts the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is evident from what follows in 66:7-14. Isaiah's prediction here of the birth of a new nation on the ruins of the old closely parallels the predictions of Daniel who also looks forward to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27). The point of 66:7-14 is to emphasize **the miraculous nature** of what God is going to do **before** he casts off old Zion finally and completely (unless those of old Zion come to him through the Messiah—Jesus Christ). **Before** the Old covenant nation is destroyed and made obsolete (Jer. 3:15-16; Dan. 9:24-27; Heb. 8:13), **the man-child (i.e., "son")** and the New covenant nation will be born. The **man-child** or "son" can be none other than the **son** and **child** of Isaiah 9:6 and **Immanuel** of Isaiah 7:14. He is the Messiah (the **anointed prince** of Dan. 9:25). He is Jesus Christ of Nazareth! The "man-child" of Isaiah 66:7 is the same as the "man-child" born of the "woman" in revelation 12:1-6. In the Revelation John sees the OT woman (faithful members of the Old covenant people) give birth to the "man-child" and the great red dragon (the devil) attempting to devour the man-child. But God catches the man-child up to heaven safe and secure. Just as in Isaiah 66:8, so in Revelation 12, the woman has a plurality of offspring or children. Of course, these children are "joint-heirs" by **adoption** (Heb. 2:10) with the **only unique (monogenes** in Greek) **Son** of John 1:18. Jesus Christ is the "seed" (singular, Gal. 3:16) and Christians are the "offspring" by adoption (Ga. 3:23-29). Old Jerusalem will produce the man-child and the offspring **before** her (the Jews) travail comes upon her. By a series of rhetorical questions Isaiah emphasizes the uniqueness of the predicted birth of the New Zion or New Nation. Who ever heard of a new nation from an old nation **before** the old nation passes away? **But even more unknown is the birth of a nation in ONE DAY!** The Hebrew word *pa'am* is translated *at once* BUT LITERALLY MEANS, "**AT ONE STROKE,**" AS WITH ONE STROKE OF A HAMMER. A "land" and a "nation" was brought forth with one stroke of God on the Day of Pentecost, June A.D. 30. Isaiah's metaphorical use of "land" should help us understand that much of what he (and other prophets, esp. Ezekiel) says about the future of God's "land" refers to the Messianic "land" (the NT church) (cf. Ezek. 37:15-28; chapters 45-48, etc.). Isaiah continues (66:10-14) the figure of a mother and her child. He pictures the citizens of the New Zion as hungry children contentedly nursing from the breasts of their mother.

God's method of building or increasing New Zion will be (a) destruction of the Old

Covenant; (b) development of the New Covenant. We repeat, Isaiah chapter 66 is the epilogue to his whole book. First judgment upon Israel and Judah for disobeying the Old Covenant (66:1-6); second promise of a new Israel-Judah (new Zion) and a new order (66:7-14); third, building of the new order by destroying the old order and opening up citizenship in the New Order to the whole world (66:15-24). J. A. Alexander, in *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, pub. Zondervan, says these verses (66:15-24) are “an integral part of the ‘great argument’ with which the whole book has been occupied, and which the Prophet never loses sight of to the end of the last sentence. The grand theme of these prophecies...is the relation of God’s people to himself and to the world, and in the latter stages of its history, to that race with which it was once outwardly identical. The great catastrophe with which the vision closes is the change of dispensations, comprehending the final abolition of the ceremonial law, and its concomitants, the introduction of a spiritual worship and the consequent diffusion of the Church, its vast enlargement by the introduction of all Gentile converts to complete equality of privilege and honor with the believing Jews, and the excision of the unbelieving Jews from all connection with the church of chosen people, which they once imagined to have no existence independent of themselves.” Isaiah 66:22-24 emphasizes the finality and perpetuity of the establishment of the New Order and the judgment of the Old order. The prophets predict a whole **new age** to come when the **Servant** of Jehovah appears: (a) there shall be **new things told** by God (Isa. 42:9; 48:6-7); (b) God’s people will sing a **new song** (Isa. 42:10); (c) God will make a completely **new covenant** (Jer. 31:31ff); (d) God will put a **new heart and spirit** in believers (Ezek. 18:31; 36:26); (e) God’s new people will have a **new name** (Isa. 62:2). Just as this new creation will be God’s final covenant and just as this new order will last forever, so those who enter into the covenant will be his people forever. That was predicted by Hosea (Hosea 2:16-23; 3:5) and fulfilled according to the apostles (Rom. 9:24-33; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). Isaiah was a preacher-prophet to the people of the Old dispensation. He had to communicate his message about the New dispensation in terminology and forms to which those of the Old dispensation could relate. So, using the terminology of “new moon and Sabbath,” Isaiah predicts that in the New order they will be faithful, regular, worship of God which will be pleasing to him. This brief picture of worship in the New dispensation given by Isaiah is dramatically paralleled and expanded in Ezekiel chapters 40-48, and in Zechariah 14:16-21. Isaiah 66:23 is Isaiah’s picture of the situation with New Zion after its creation—66:24 is the prophets’ description of the relationship of the New, true worshipers, to what they see concerning the Old dispensation which has been judged and abrogated by a vivid physical destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70 (Heb. 8:13, etc.). The New citizens of New Zion are safe within her walls, worshiping Jehovah gladly and truly. Occasionally New Zion’s citizens “look upon the dead bodies” of those who have transgressed against Jehovah and the sight of his judgment upon the sinners reminds New Zion of the greatness of its redemption and the awful terror of God’s punishment from which she has been saved (see Rom. 11:17-36). Christians witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the dispersion of the Jews and the abrogation of the Old covenant and were reminded of the fate of all who disobey god and reject his Son and warned that a similar fate awaits an unbelieving world when Jesus comes back to earth at the end of time (Matt. 24:36-51). Isaiah’s pictorialization of the great judgment of God upon an impenitent Israel and the founding of a new order upon the ashes of the old has parallels: (a) the great battle of Gog and Magog and the new land, city and temple of Ezekiel, chapters 38-48; (b) the

great battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat and the escape of those who call upon the name of the Lord in Joel 2:28—3:21); (c) the battle and victory the “king” will win, the purging of the land, and the practice of purified worship depicted in Zechariah 9:9—14:21. So, Isaiah closes his great prophecy predicting, not the end of time, but the end of the Old dispensation and the creation by God of a New dispensation. Isaiah is predicting the ***first*** coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Messiah’s kingdom, the church—**not** the second coming of the Messiah. Essentially, Isaiah’s message is that God’s great plan to redeem the world involves the incarnation of the Word of God in the Person of the Suffering Servant; the atonement for sin by the Servant; the offering of a new covenant relationship of grace through faith; the incorporation into that covenant relationship and the formation of a New Zion from all in the world who will believe and accept its terms; the judgment and punishment forever of all who will not accept it. ISAIAH IS THE “GOSPEL-PROPHET” AND A RIGHT-MISSIONARY-VISIONARY!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

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