

Dickson Old Testament Commentary

ISAIAH

WRITER

Isaiah was born somewhere between 760 and 780 B.C. He was a prophet of the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah. He was the son of Amoz. It is traditionally believed that Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah. It is possible, therefore, that Isaiah was born into an aristocratic family, having access to the royal court throughout his life. For this reason, his ministry was centered primarily in the city of Jerusalem, while he worked among those who were in power.

He was married and had two sons. The oldest was named Shearjashub, meaning, “a remnant will return” (7:3). The younger was named Mahershalalhashbaz, meaning, “hastening to the spoils” or “hurrying to the prey” (8:3,18). Both names were prophetic of the imminent plunder of both Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel) by the Assyrians. We are not told of the ministry of his wife, for Isaiah referred to her as “the prophetess” (8:3). Though she did not function as Isaiah in reference to prophecy concerning nations, we would assume from the designation as a prophetess that she shared in teaching the people the will of God. Whatever the case, both husband and wife worked together in ministry.

DATE

Isaiah’s ministry of prophecy began during the reign of Uzziah. He ministered throughout the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, who were kings of the southern kingdom. His life may have extended into the reign of Manasseh. However, it is possible that he was killed by Manasseh in the early part of Manasseh’s reign (See 2 Kg 21:2-16). This would mean that Isaiah’s prophetic ministry could have taken place between 740 and 700 B.C. Throughout this time, Isaiah wrote the material of this book, which later came together into the one composition that we now have as the book of Isaiah.

BOOK

Contemporary with the prophetic ministry of Isaiah was Micah, who ministered to the rural people of Judah. Isaiah may have also had contact with both Amos and Hosea, who were prophets to the northern kingdom, Israel. Because of the significant time in history during which Isaiah prophesied, he was the most influential prophet of Israel’s history. He came at a time when Israel began reaping the final fruits that resulted from her desire to have a king rule over her. The kings led the northern kingdom into apostasy, and thus God’s judgment came upon the north

during Isaiah's ministry. Though Judah was allowed to continue for another one hundred years, God's judgment would eventually come on them. God thus worked through Isaiah to preserve His people in the promised land for as long as possible.

Isaiah's message was focused on the eternal God who was the creator of all things. Isaiah referred to Him as the "Lord of armies," "the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity," "the mighty one of Israel," and "the Maker." Throughout the book God is referred to as "the Holy One of Israel" 33 times. Because the people of God refused to remain loyal to God as the only true and living God, they went into apostasy by creating religious beliefs and behavior after their own desires. Thus God stood innocent when it came to handing down judgment to an apostate people who had rejected His law.

But after the judgment was handed down, and the people purged of rebellion in captivity, it was a time for restoration. This is the book of God's salvation. Though His people reaped the consequences of their unfaithfulness, God was always ready for their repentance. He thus brings salvation to His people (49:8; 59:16; 61:10; 63:5). The word "salvation" and its equivalent forms are used 32 times throughout the book. Israel was saved from her captivities, but also from her sin. In reference to salvation from sin, God's salvation is offered to all men (46:13; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11). Through faith, man accepts His salvation (12:2; 33:2,6). Once known, His salvation is to be made known to all (12:2,3; 25:9; 60:18).

The historical message of salvation in reference to the remnant of Israel being restored to the land of promise after the captivity, therefore, is the metaphorical foundation for the spiritual salvation that would eventually come through the suffering Messiah. This book, therefore, is the Messianic book of the Old Testament. It is a message of the Christ who was to come for the salvation of all men, both for the Jews and for the Gentiles. The book of Isaiah is quoted 308 times in the New Testament, thus making the book the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament.

The apologetic nature of the book is profound. The details that are given in the book concerning the Christ set the stage for the remnant of Israel to identify the Messiah when He entered upon the world stage of history. Since the words of the book were written centuries before the coming of Jesus, we conclude that no one by chance could have fulfilled the many prophecies of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. If we had this book alone, we would conclude that Jesus was the Son of God. We would come to this conclusion because of the many prophecies in the book concerning the Suffering Savior that Jesus fulfilled in every detail.

Some writers have assumed that the book of Isaiah was actually written by at least three different writers. This assumption is based on the fact that the Hebrew text varies in literary style throughout the book. There are also variations in the message of the book, specifically the message beginning with chapter 40. It is thus

assumed that the book was actually the result of a compilation of many different writings by different authors. It is assumed that these writings were eventually brought together after the Babylonian captivity into one book that we call Isaiah.

The argument that Isaiah is a compilation of several authors is weak for several reasons. The complete text of Isaiah that was discovered in 1947 with the Dead Sea Scrolls, shows no division between chapters 39 and 40. (The Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah dates around 150 B.C.) The view that the book was composed by different authors does not recognize the nature by which the Holy Spirit guided the hand of those writers He used to write sacred literature. The Spirit allowed the writers to use their own vocabulary and writing styles, with unique references to the cultural background of each writer. Since the ministry of Isaiah extended over a period of at least fifty years, we would assume that he would change in his use of words, as well as in his style of writing. As historical events changed, we would assume that Isaiah would adapt the nature of his style of writing to the historical context in which he ministered. We would not assume that Isaiah wrote the entire book in one setting, but over a lifetime of ministry. Every writer knows that his writing style and message would have changed throughout the years as the circumstances surrounding Israel and Judah changed. The book may have been a compilation of writings, but they were all writings of Isaiah, the prophet.

If one denies Isaiah's writing of the entire book, then he must answer the fact that the entire book is credited to Isaiah in 1:1. Throughout the book the writer manifests familiarity with Jerusalem and its environment before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (See 62:6). No part of the book was written as if the writer was far away from Jerusalem. Consider also the fact that the New Testament gives credit to Isaiah, and no other, for writing the book as it was in the hands of the 1st century Christians (See Mt 12:17-21; Jn 12:38-41; Rm 10:16,20,21).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The book of Isaiah covers one of the most significant periods of history in reference to the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel before it went into captivity. The historical record of Isaiah's ministry is recorded in 2 Kings 15–20 and 2 Chronicles 26–32. It was an era of world events in history in which the people of God were not unaffected because of their apostasy and alliances with other nations. The Mycenaean age of Greece was coming to a close with the formation of the Greek city-states. Shortly after Isaiah's birth, the city of Rome was founded. The predominant world empire of Assyria was growing and would become God's proxy judgment nation to take the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity. In the early years of Isaiah's ministry, the 23rd dynasty was in power in Egypt. Before his death, the 24th and 25th dynasties of Egypt came into power. About 25 years after Isaiah was born, the northern kingdom would go into Assyrian captivity. His ministry

would extend through the reigns in the southern kingdom of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. It is speculated that Isaiah met his death at the hands of Manasseh, the reigning son of Hezekiah.

The rise of the Assyrian Empire stirred historical events that greatly affected the Israelites. As the Assyrian Empire grew, it focused on claiming territory east of its capital, Nineveh. Syria was subdued by the Assyrians and subjected to tribute. However, Rezin, king of Syria, recruited Pekah, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. These two kings then sought support from Ahaz, king of Judah, in order to make their stand against the Assyrians. However, Ahaz refused, and thus aroused the wrath of Rezin and Pekah, who thought to dethrone Ahaz and place the son of Tabeel on the throne of David in Jerusalem (2 Kg 16:5; Is 7:6). What followed was the Syro-Ephraimitic War that occurred in 734 B.C.

Hezekiah followed Ahaz as king of Judah. He was a righteous king who carried out many reforms in Judah, specifically in cutting down the Asherah groves of idolatrous worship and removing the high places (2 Kg 18:4,22). He reinstated the Passover (2 Ch 30:1), and called on all Judah to return to true worship of God.

Sargon II, king of Assyria, carried away the northern kingdom, Israel, into captivity in 722/21 B.C. As a policy to destroy nationhood, the Assyrians displaced people they had conquered and scattered them throughout their kingdom. They thus scattered thousands of Jews throughout the Assyrian Empire, and then brought peoples from other conquered nations into the northern territory of Palestine (2 Kg 17:6,24). These resettled people in Palestine would later develop the Samaritan race.

After the northern kingdom was taken into Assyrian captivity, the Assyrians, through the leadership of King Sennacherib, later captured 46 fortified cities of Israel and took 200,150 Israelites into captivity. Sennacherib came even to the walls of Jerusalem, but the Angel of God raised His hand against his army, killing in one night 185,000 of his army (2 Kg 18:13 – 19:36).

GOD'S PROPHECY OF THE NATIONS					
	Amos	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Others
Babylon		13:1 – 14:23	50 – 51		Habakkuk 2:6-17
Philistia	1:6-8	14:29-32	47	25:15-17	
Moab	2:1-3	15 – 16	48	25:8-11	
Damasus	1:11,12	17:1-3	49:23-27		
Egypt		19	46:1-26	29 – 32	
Edom	1:9,10	21:11,12	49:7-22	25:12-14	Obadiah
Tyre	1:13-15	23		26 – 28	
Ammon			49:1-6	25:1-7	
Nineveh					Nahum

Prophecies Concerning Judah And Israel (1:1 – 12:16)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1), (2) Religiosity does not hide rebellion (1:2-31), (3) Chastisement brings a future (2:1 – 4:6), (4) God’s judgment on wicked people (5:1-30), (5) Isaiah’s calling (6:1-13), (6) Hope in the coming Messiah (7:1 – 9:7), (7) The doom of Samaria (9:8 – 10:4), (8) The doom of Assyria (10:5-34), (9) Gathering of the remnant (11:1 – 12:6)

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1:1 Vision: Most of what Isaiah recorded came to him through visions from God and were recorded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Since he recorded many historical events, we would conclude that these events were recorded by inspiration in order to be accurate in every detail (See 1 Sm 9:9; 2 Ch 32:32). **Judah:** The name “Judah” at this time in history referred to the southern kingdom. The name “Israel” is used throughout the book to refer to the northern kingdom.

RELIGIOSITY DOES NOT HIDE REBELLION

1:2-4 God calls on the heaven and earth to witness the apostasy of His people (Dt 30:19; 32:1; Ps 50:1-6; Mc 1:1; 6:1-2). **Ox ... donkey:** The animals know their master, but Israel had forgotten who created the nation by bringing it into existence when they came out of the bondage of Egypt. Israel would not ex-

ist as a nation if it had not been for the direct hand of God in delivering them from Egyptian bondage.

1:5-9 Sinful nation: Society had become corrupt. The people had turned from being a society that was guided by the law of God, to a society that was guided by the moral lawlessness of their fathers. Throughout the generations, they had allowed the unrighteous behavior of the fathers to be passed from one generation to another. When Isaiah came as the voice of God to the nation, it was too late to repent. They were destined for captivity. **Wounds and bruises:** They had been disciplined by God so much in the past that their entire body was covered with scars. They were at a time in their history where the chastisement of the Lord would not cause them to repent. They were hardened to the discipline of the Lord. They no longer recognized that their hard times were actually the chastening of the Lord. And because they were hardened, they would not repent. There comes a time in the history of a nation that the culture becomes so sinful, that the culture as a whole cannot turn back to God. **Your cities are burned:** It is significant to understand that the past tense is often used by Isaiah to refer to the certainty of God’s judgment. The judgment is given as if it had already happened. God’s prophet thus writes concerning the future as if it had already taken place. The picture of desolation here was yet to happen, but the people needed to know that its occurrence was certain. When God speaks in prophecy, it is as if the fulfillment has already happened.

1:10-17 Word ... law: The leaders of Judah had done the same as the leaders of Sodom and Gomorrah. They had forsaken the law of God. **You rulers:** When the leaders rebel against God, they lead the people away from God (See comments Js 3:1). **Full of burnt offerings:** They were involved in sacrilege concerning those things that God required in the law. They were ceremonially keeping the law, but their hearts were far from God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They forsook the weightier matters of the law (See comments Mt 23:1-33). **Tread My courts:** One can walk on the grounds of the temple, but his offerings are useless if not given out of a sincere heart. **Vain offerings:** Their worship was vain because it came from insincere hearts. One cannot live in iniquity, and yet be a part of a solemn assembly that is dedicated to the worship of God. Their lives were not given in worship of God, and thus their assemblies to carry out the sacrifices were useless. One can approach God in an acceptable manner only when his life reflects godly living. **Appointed feasts:** The law of God required their coming before Him in order to offer sacrifices. However, they could justly come before Him only when they lived according to His law. In order for their sacrifices to be acceptable, they had to repent. **Spread forth your hands:** If one lifts up holy hands to God in worship, he must be sure that his life is holy (See Ps 24:3,4; see comments 1 Tm 2:8). **Seek justice:** God's people must be known for being just and the defenders of those who are oppressed.

1:18-20 The plea was for repentance. God's forgiveness was based on their repentance. **Scarlet ... crimson:** This was the color of the robes that were worn by royalty. God's call includes a promise of forgiveness and cleansing (Compare Rv 3:4,5; 7:14). In the historical situation, their repentance and forgiveness included more than repentance of the sin that was in their lives. Their continued existence in the land as a nation depended on their repentance as a nation. However, they did not repent. As a result, the sword of God's judgment through the Assyrians and Babylonians eventually came upon them because they sought to live as a rebellious nation.

1:21-23 Isaiah expressed amazement at the fact that a nation that was miraculously born out of Egyptian captivity by the power of God could turn from God to follow after gods the people had created after their own imagination. The leadership of the nation was responsible for such an apostasy. Isaiah thus focused on the leadership of Jerusalem in taking the nation to the harlotry bed of pagan nations. The city had become corrupt. Society was unjust to the point of oppressing widows and orphans. They were corrupt in their business practices in that they mixed pure silver with other metals in order to profit from dishonest trade. Their wine was diluted. Leaders who had partnered with thieves and unrighteousness ruled from palaces. Leaders would not perform their responsibilities without someone giving them a bribe. Because the poor could not pay the bribes, they received no justice.

1:24-26 God would bring vengeance upon Jerusalem for her apostasy from the law of God. But with the punishment of vengeance there would come salvation for a remnant of faithful people. Among the majority who were apostates, there was a faithful minority. But when God's chastisement of the nation came through captivity, the faithful minority had to pay the price for the apostate majority. **Dross:** When the dross was taken from the molten metal, only the pure remained. God would wipe His disciplining hand over Jerusalem and remove all the dross of sin. What would be left would be pure, the minority who were faithful.

1:27-31 Though their sin brought destruction, their destruction (chastisement) revealed a remnant. The consuming fire of the Lord was unleashed on them for their own salvation as a remnant nation (See Hb 12:29). They had to be refined with the consuming fire of the Lord in order to recognize the deplorable state of sin into which they had fallen. **Oak whose leaf fades:** Sin had brought them to a spiritual drought, which drought made them as dry leaves ready to be sparked into a fire. When one becomes spiritually dry, he will be burned with the discipline of the Lord in order that repentance might be encouraged.

Chapter 2

CHASTISEMENT BRINGS A FUTURE

2:1-4 This is a very significant prophecy in reference to the present reign of Jesus over all things. The prophecies of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are par-

allel. Both prophets discussed the same future events. Isaiah and Micah foretold of the coming response to the future kingdom reign of Jesus. They discussed the effect the kingdom reign of God would have on men throughout the world (See comments 65 & 66). **Last days:** Isaiah affirmed that the events of this prophecy would occur in the last days. In view of the fact that the fulfillment of this prophecy took place in the days of the Roman kings, we must conclude that reference here was to the last days of national Israel. These days were in the days of the Roman kings. Reference was not to the "church age," or to a brief time before the final coming of Jesus. The last days were in existence at the time the prophecy was fulfilled (See comments At 2:16,17). **Mountain of the Lord's house:** The passage does not say that the Lord's house is that which would be established. Isaiah stated that the "mountain" of the Lord's house would be firmly established above every power. "Mountain" is metaphorical for the reign of the Lord that would be established above all kingdoms of this world. "Established" is a word depicting the idea that the Lord's reign would be firmly implanted in the hearts of man. "House" is a metaphor taken from the tabernacle, which to the Jews, was a symbol of God's presence in Israel. However, the house to come about which Isaiah spoke was not a physical structure. It would be spiritual in nature (Lk 17:20,21). Isaiah was using the word "house" as a metaphor to indicate that the presence of God would be among or in His people as the Jews understood His

presence in Israel as symbolized by the tabernacle, and later, the temple in Jerusalem. **All nations:** The Lord's house would not be composed of a single nation as in the Old Testament. It would go beyond the nation of Israel. Peoples from all nations of the world would come into its shelter because of the strength of the mountain. This was a prophecy of the evangelistic nature of the people who would be of the house of God to come. People from all nations would come into the house of God because people of the house of God would go into all nations. **Flow to it:** The result of the establishment of the mountain (kingdom reign) would be that people from all nations would flow unto it. Men and women would respond to the kingdom reign of the Lord that would be established far above all kings and kingdoms of this world. It would not be a physical kingdom as a kingdom of this world. It would be a spiritual kingdom (Lk 17:20,21). **Let us go up to the mountain:** The prophecy places the one who makes the invitation to go to Jerusalem, outside Jerusalem. This is a statement that would be made from those Jews who were scattered throughout the world who had made trips to Jerusalem after the events of Acts 2. Announcements would be made throughout the world to go unto Jerusalem in order to be instructed in the word of God. **Word would go from Jerusalem:** With the nation of Israel, the law originated at Mount Sinai. In the future, however, the word would initially begin at and go from the city of Jerusalem in Palestine. Again, this is a picture of the

evangelistic nature of the new order that was to come. The word of God would be spread abroad to all nations. It would not be confined to one nation as Israel. It would not be confined to one culture of people. It would originate with the Jews, but it would go into all the world and to all nations (Mt 28:19,20). **Judge among the nations:** God would send judgment among the nations by the preaching of His word. The judgment would come by the authority of the word. When men either accepted or rejected the preached word of Jesus, they would judge themselves (Jn 12:48). **Beat their swords into plowshares:** The people who would come unto the mountain, and thus, into the shelter of the house of God would come for peace, not war. It would be there that they enjoy the brotherhood of mankind. They would enjoy peace because in God's house there would be no distinctions made in reference to nationality. In Israel, nationhood gave rise to physical conflict. However, in the new order, brotherhood would give rise to peace and harmony among men. Men would not seek to learn how to destroy their brothers, but learn to have peace on earth among men. The prophecy of verses 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 were fulfilled in the 1st century. Hebrews 1:1,2 states that God spoke to the fathers before the coming of Jesus through the prophets. However, He "*has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...*" (Hb 1:2). When the Hebrew writer wrote these words he was in the last days of national Israel. When Peter quoted Joel 2:28 in Acts 2:16,17, he said, "*But this is what was spoken by*

the prophet Joel: And it will come to pass in the last days” Therefore, the last days of Israel were in existence when God poured out the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. The phrase “last days” in the context of Acts 2 does not refer to the time of the “church age,” that is, an age that began with the establishment of the church in A.D. 30 and will extend to the end of time. The statement emphasizes the fact that the last days were in existence at the time the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Joel had said that in the last days God would pour out the Spirit. Therefore, Peter and the earthly disciples were in the last days of national Israel at the time or moment the Spirit was poured out. If we say that the phrase “last days” refers to the entire church age, then we would have the church in existence before it began in Acts 2. The government of national Israel was finally destroyed in A.D. 70. Hebrews 1:1,2 was written before this date. The Hebrew writer stated, “*God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*” Therefore, God was speaking to men through Jesus during Jesus’ personal ministry. He was speaking through Jesus before Jesus’ death on the cross. He continued to speak by inspiration through the apostles and prophets after Jesus’ death and before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Though God continues to speak today through the inspired written word, this does not mean that Hebrews 1:1,2 refers exclusively to these times, though this is the last dispensation of God’s work on earth. Acts 2:16,17 refers to the last days of national Israel in which God poured

out the Spirit and in which Jesus spoke to humanity. Jesus continues to speak today through His written word. But it was in the last days of national Israel, and before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that Jews were calling upon one another to go to Jerusalem to hear the word of the Lord that was preached by the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem for at least fifteen years after the establishment of the church. ***House of the God of Jacob:*** In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said during His earthly ministry that His church was yet in the future. However, in Acts 2:47 men and women were added to those who had submitted to the sovereignty of Jesus. In Acts 5:11 the church of the submitted is stated as being in existence. The church, therefore, was established sometime after Matthew 16:18 and before Acts 5:11. Between Matthew 16 and Acts 5 Jesus ascended to the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-22). He was given dominion, glory and sovereignty (Dn 7:13,14). He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). To this “mountain” of the Lord’s sovereignty men and women of all nations have responded. They have responded in obedience to the gospel, and thus have become the spiritual house of God. Paul linked the phrase “house of God” with the “church of the living God” in 1 Timothy 3:15. Since the church is composed of people who have responded to the kingship of Jesus, we must affirm, therefore, that the church began when people first submitted to the kingship of Jesus. Jesus ascended to the throne of David about seven days before Acts 2. Peter

announced the ascension and reign in Acts 2. People heard the message and were obedient to Jesus' sovereignty (At 2:41). Therefore, the church began when people first submitted to the sovereign reign of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, about 3,000 people first submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. It was at this time, therefore, that the church was established. **Go and say:** Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). He died for the sins of the world. Therefore, His plea is "*whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (Jn 3:16). All men are invited to come to the mountain of God's sovereignty. God is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pt 3:9). Obedient believers from all nations of the world flow to the mountain of God's sovereignty, and thus are obedient to the good news of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). This was the fulfillment of the prophecies of both Isaiah and Micah. **The word of the Lord from Jerusalem:** Jesus told His apostles in Luke 24:47 that the message of the gospel should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. In Acts 1:8 He stated that the apostles would be His witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. **He will judge among the nations:** In John 12:48 Jesus said that those who reject Him will be judged by His word. One brings the judgment of Jesus upon himself according to his reaction to the word of Jesus (See Jn 9:39). When one

hears the word and rejects it, he judges himself, for it is the word of Jesus that will judge him in the last day. This is why Paul stated that some Jews judged themselves unworthy of eternal life because they rejected the message of his preaching (At 13:46). God judges among the nations today through the authoritative word of His Son (See Hb 1:1,2). He will judge the world at the final judgment through Jesus and His word (At 17:31; Rm 2:16). **Swords into plowshares:** As opposed to physical warfare in the history of Israel, in the kingdom of Jesus there would be no physical warfare among men. In the kingdom, Jesus brings peace among races (Ep 2:14). In the church, Jesus gives peace of mind (Jn 14:27; see 16:33; Rm 5:1; Ph 4:7; Cl 1:20; 3:15). In every sense of the word peace, therefore, Jesus is what Paul said of Him in 2 Thessalonians 3:16, "*Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.*"

2:5-9 Because they had rebelled against the will of the Lord, Israel was walking in darkness. The evidence of their degradation was selfishness. They did not look to the needs of others, but each one to his own needs. **Influences:** Instead of keeping themselves a unique nation by maintaining a separation from the nations around them, they adopted the ways of the nations who were without God. They engaged in trading contracts and covenants with foreign nations. They allowed the religious beliefs of those with whom they came into union to change their faith. Pagan rites and rituals characterized their religious behavior at the

time Isaiah wrote. **Work of their own hands:** When a religious person desires to live according to his own wishes, he creates a god after his own imagination. His god is created in order to soothe his own conscience. In order to remember this god, he forms a representation of his god in either stone, wood or clay. In this context, we must not forget that their treasures of gold and silver were formed into idols. There were no banks, and thus one's personal treasury was made into a unique idol for each household. In this case, therefore, their idolatry was not only in reference to foreign religions, but worship of their financial wealth (Cl 3:5). They worshiped their great treasures. Both the common man and the rich man participated in this religious/economic culture of materialism.

2:10-22 Day of the Lord: This was a day of judgment. It was judgment in time on the arrogance and materialism of a nation that had forsaken God. The day would come, however, when the idolaters would hide themselves from the terror of the Lord. In terror, they would seek to hide themselves in caves and caverns. When God is exalted, men are humiliated. Though one would be proud as the cedars of Lebanon and strong as the oaks of Bashan, in terror he will seek refuge from the judgment of God. All the accomplishments of Judah would eventually be smashed by God because they had forsaken Him (See Jl 3:16; Hg 2:6; compare Hb 12:26; Rv 6:15,16; 18:11-19). **Cast away ... idols:** The gold and silver will mean nothing when one is running for his life from the armies of

either Assyria or Babylon. The idols will be powerless in the face of those who would eventually take the Israelites into captivity.

Chapter 3

3:1-9 The warning is that God is about to remove Judah's supplies and sustenance. God chided them concerning their rulers among them who failed to deliver them. He would replace them with children and babes, or those who behaved as mischievous children and insolent novices. Because of the lack of spiritual and moral leadership by the leaders, the people were oppressed and exploited. The social situation was so deplorable that any man with any means was asked to be a ruler over the people.

Bread: If the bread was taken away, the life of the people was taken away. **Supply of water:** They could not trust in their supply of water that came into the walls of Jerusalem through the conduit that Hezekiah built. **Evil upon themselves:** When they suffered the judgment of God, they would realize that they brought their calamity upon themselves. If anyone sought to blame God, then they would have to see God through the pronouncements of His law. And in these pronouncements were judgments, if they forsook His law.

3:10-12 Cause you to err: See comments Js 3:1. Their leaders led them into apostasy because they did not stand up for that which was right. However, the people were guilty because they were willing to be led by unrighteous leadership. God would judge the leaders, but

the people were individually accountable for themselves.

3:13-15 The rulers had reigned with little concern for the poor. They ruled for their own sake, and not for the sake of the people. Any ruler who seeks to dominate the people for his own benefit, stands under the judgment of God. If Israel would have maintained God's laws concerning the poor, there would have been no poor in the agricultural community throughout the land.

3:16-26 God will disgrace the proud women of Jerusalem. He will bring shame on these haughty ladies who paraded themselves before men in order to draw attention to themselves. All their treasured ornaments that they wore in order to enhance their beauty would be stripped from them. Such outward appearances were repulsive to God because they were worn by wanton women who were arrogant with their riches. All those things with which they dressed themselves would be traded for the rags of a captive. The war to come would claim the lives of all the mighty warriors, and lead to the decimation of males to the point that seven women would seek to find one available man to marry (4:1).

Chapter 4

4:1-6 *Branch of the Lord:* The Branch would be the founder of a new era for Israel. Isaiah speaks of the returned remnant that will have been purged of sin, and then brought back into the land of promise. In contrast to the social environment of the old Jerusalem that was explained in chapter 3, this new

Jerusalem would be the redeemed from captivity (Compare Ps 15; 24). Though the historical application is in reference to the remnant that would return from captivity, we would also see in these words the coming of the Messiah, the Branch, and the sanctification of God's people who are now the church, the new Jerusalem (See 1 Co 1:2; 2 Co 1:1). *Spirit of judgment:* "Spirit" is from the Hebrew word that also means "breath." It was God's breath of judgment that purged them of sin. *Cloud ... flaming fire:* This is a metaphorical reference to the Shekinah that led Israel throughout the wilderness wanderings after they came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 13:21; Nm 9:15; 10:34). God would manifest His presence among the repentant and cleanse the people of the new Jerusalem. *Tabernacle:* Or, tent. The tent of God would stretch over His people for protection. His atoning grace would be a place of refuge for those who were weary of their sins. When we submit to the will of God, God goes to work for us, both spiritually and physically.

Chapter 5

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON WICKED PEOPLE

5:1-7 This is the song of the vineyard, a portrayal of God's planting of Israel as a vineyard in the land of promise (Compare Mt 21:33-46; Ps 80:8-13). *Beloved:* It was the God of love who planted Israel on a fruitful hill. The soil was fertile, and thus should have brought forth what was expected. The field was Palestine, the central trading route be-

tween the northern countries of the ancient world, and all of Africa to the south. It was a location where passing traders could be taught of God by the rural farmers of Israel. However, they failed to assume this responsibility. **Fenced:** God protected His people. **Stones:** The Canaanite nations were extracted, at least most of them. **He expected:** Everything was done in order that faithfulness be produced and God's name glorified. **Wild grapes:** The fruit of iniquity was a small, sour and hard grape that was useless for producing wine. Israel was planted with all the advantages, but produced wild and useless grapes. She was now useless for bringing glory to God. **O inhabitants of Jerusalem:** God asked Israel to judge themselves. He knew that they would pronounce the right judgment upon themselves. They knew their apostasy, but were too far gone at the time of Isaiah to turn back. Their existing culture had fallen from the righteousness of God, and thus they could not turn back. Though they knew the meaning of the song of the vineyard, they would still go into captivity because of their apostate culture. It is impossible for entire cultures to make paradigm shifts to righteousness when they are satisfied with where they are. Godless cultures have no moral conscience that will lead them back to God. In the case of Israel, God took away all His protection and handed them over to the invading armies of Assyria and Babylon. **Hedge:** He took away His blessing and protection. **Wall:** He allowed foreign nations to enter Palestine. **Waste:** Their farms were laid waste when thou-

sands of Israelites were taken into captivity.

5:8-10 House to house: Greed drove the rich to consume the land by buying out neighbors. Farms became so large that a poor class was developed in Palestine during Isaiah's time. But such was contrary to the law of God (See Nm 27:1-11; 33:54; 1 Kg 21:3,4). They crowded out small farmers who were driven to the cities as the poor. Large land owners made no room for the poor to glean from the leftovers. **Houses will be desolate:** The punishment for greed would come when the invading armies of Assyria and Babylon would empty their houses of all their treasured goods. **One bath:** Though ten acres could produce thousand of gallons of grape juice, it would produce only one bath (8 gallons).

5:11-12 The wealthy of society became indifferent to the work of God through Israel. They consumed their time in drunken parties, unaware of the impending danger that was looming in the near future. Their wealth had introverted their behavior to think only of themselves. They were spiritually insensitive, living in a world of luxury they thought would never end.

5:13-17 The result of their material life-style was their indifference toward the work of God. Because of their indifference they could not perceive that their nobles would die as a result of the judgment of God. The common people would be consumed with thirst. **Sheol:** The grave would be filled with the dead to the point that the dead could not be num-

bered. **Foreigners:** They would be extracted from their farmlands and taken into captivity. The traveling nomads would eat the fruit of their labors from their farms.

5:18,19 Cords ... cart ropes: What started out as supposedly insignificant violations of the law had grown into cultural values that directed the behavior of society. Common individual sins became cultural norms by which society conducted itself. They arrogantly and ignorantly hasten the work of God to bring judgment upon themselves. But what they thought would be a glorious future by the work of God, was to be national calamity. What they thought would be God's good work in their lives was actually God working to bring His judgment upon them.

5:20-23 Their cultural norms that should have been based on the word of God, were now based on a perversion of righteousness. It was not like it was during the days of the judges when individuals and individual tribes sinned, and then could repent, for they knew the law to which they could repent. They were now a generation that could not nationally return to God, for their moral norms were so twisted that they could not return to the law of God. **Wise in their own eyes:** They had become a law unto themselves, and thus rejected the law of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). When societies create their own moral codes, they will reject the law of God. **Men of strength:** They took pride in being able to drink much. **Justify the wicked:** Drunken judges are a disgrace to society. They

pervert justice because they are perverted in their thinking. Much strong drink had intoxicated their thinking.

5:24,25 Fire ... consumes: God's judgment on them would send thousands to death. They were corrupt to the root, and thus brought forth blossoms of iniquity. Their selfish prosperity manifested the depth of their iniquity. The reason the sinful culture went so deep was that they had rejected the law of God (Hs 4:6; compare Mk 7:9). **His anger:** See 9:12,17,21; 10:4; 23:11.

5:26-30 Nations ... will come: If the northern kingdom would have known what these verses truly meant, they would surely have repented. But here God summoned the Assyrian Empire as His proxy judgment upon His vineyard that had gone bad. He throws up the ensign in order that the army assemble for war against His people. The Assyrian army would come with swiftness, fully prepared to carry out God's judgment on an apostate nation. Their warrior culture would move them to totally consume the northern kingdom. When God makes such a pronouncement against a nation, even if the nation were His chosen people, only doom awaits.

Chapter 6

ISAIAH'S CALLING

6:1-5 King Uzziah: During the last twenty years of Uzziah's life, Isaiah worked as a prophet in Judah. Because of Uzziah's presumptuous behavior in reference to the temple, he was cursed with leprosy (2 Ch 26:16-21). His son, Jotham, reigned as a coregent king in the

absence of his father. It was during this time of national uncertainty that Isaiah was reaffirmed as a prophet of God with the vision that is explained in this chapter. Israel's king had died, but the true King of Israel was still reigning in heaven, lofty and exalted. **Seraphim:** Or, "the burning ones." **The whole earth:** See Ps 8; 19. **My eyes have seen the King:** Other than seeing the Lord, the One Isaiah saw in this vision is not specified. He was not identified specifically until John wrote centuries later concerning Jesus, "*These things Isaiah said because he saw His [Jesus'] glory and spoke of Him*" (Jn 12:41). **I am undone:** This is what we would expect of mortal man in the presence of a divine manifestation of God (Ex 33:20). The closer one comes to realizing the presence of God, the more he is humbled in worship. When one is in the presence of a manifestation of God, he realizes, his frailty and insignificant being. Because of his fallibility, Isaiah confessed his unworthiness. Man's lips that often betray hidden fractures in the human heart are unworthy to give praise in the presence of divinity (Js 3:2). Because God keeps His presence just beyond the realm of our sense perceptions are we able to voice our praise of Him. If He manifested Himself directly to us, we would be undone as Isaiah, and thus would be speechless.

6:6,7 The hot coal was taken from the altar upon which the sin offering was made for the nation (Lv 17:11). The seraphim touched the coal to the part of man that reveals so much sin. In this case, it cleansed Isaiah of sin in order that his

lips be used to prophesy for God. His mouth and heart were thus cleansed of iniquity and sin in order that he assume his destiny for God.

6:8 Here am I. Send me: God knows the hearts of those who will answer His call to preach to His people. He knew the heart of Isaiah. He knew that Isaiah would respond to this vision in the manner that is herein revealed. In this case, Isaiah was privileged to see a manifestation of the presence of the Lord. He thus responded to be the Lord's ambassador. It would be many centuries later when the Lord Jesus would set foot on this earth and again motivate men to go into all the world (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16).

6:9,10 Isaiah would never be able to feel that his preaching was successful. He was commissioned to a spiritually insensitive people, a people who were dull of hearing. They were dull of hearing because they had no interest in hearing the word of God preached. They had no concern for what God had to say in reference to their behavior. He would suffer severely because of what he would say to the people. These words indicate a mission of failure if one considers responses to one's message a measure of success.

6:11-13 Lord, how long: Because of the futility of the mission, Isaiah voiced his frustration. But this would enter into the realm of God's foreknowledge. Isaiah would experience the fall of the northern kingdom, but not the fall of Judah. He saw what was happening in the north, and thus was given a visual

illustration of what would happen in Judah. Through mass deportations by the Assyrians and Babylonians, Palestine would essentially be emptied of inhabitants. The land would be laid waste and houses emptied. ***The holy seed is its stock:*** The desolation would be almost complete. But out of the stump, the seedline promise given to Abraham, would be continued through the Davidic seedline (Gn 12:1-3). The remnant would emerge and remain. From the remnant that would remain, One could come forth who would be a blessing to all mankind.

Chapter 7 HOPE IN THE COMING MESSIAH

7:1-9 The Syro-Ephraimitic War took place in 734 B.C., about 12 years before the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered and taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. This message came in the last days of the existing northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom, Judah, would be spared until its final fall in 586 B.C. when it would eventually be taken into Babylonian captivity. The Assyrian Empire, under the reign of Tiglath-pileser, was expanding to the north of Palestine. Both Syria (with its capital, Damascus, and reigning king, Rezin) and Israel (the northern kingdom referred to as Israel, with its reigning king, Pekah, in its capital, Samaria), formed an alliance against the Assyrians. In order to enhance their efforts against Assyria, they proposed to subject their foe to the south, Judah, with its king,

Ahaz. Since Hoshea, the last king of Israel, assassinated his predecessor in the 12th year of Jotham, Ahaz was actually reigning coregently with his father, Jotham (See 2 Kg 15:30). In order to defend Judah, Ahaz sent to Tiglath-pileser a plea to help him against the threat of the alliance between Syria and Israel. Tiglath-pileser answered the appeal, and thus conquered the two enemies of Judah. This move by Ahaz angered God, and thus Isaiah was given the following messages with which to confront Ahaz. Because of his lack of faith in God to protect Judah, the Assyrians would plunder the countryside of Judah, raping the land of its productivity. The land would revert to open pasture lands where roaming livestock would feed. ***Rezin ... Pekah:*** At this time in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, the people had fallen so far away from God that they made an alliance with Syria in order to make war against their fellow Jews to the south in Judah. ***Conduit of the upper pool:*** Ahaz began a tunnel project to bring water from a pool outside Jerusalem into the city. The project was later completed by Hezekiah (22:9,11; 2 Kg 18:17; 2 Ch 32:3,4,30). ***Take heed and be quiet:*** It was a time to remain calm. Ahaz was around thirty years old, and Isaiah was not much older than twenty. It was a time, therefore, that both prophet and king had to remain calm in the face of an allegiance of two nations that sought to conquer Jerusalem. ***65 years:*** This would be the time in the future when Assyria would conquer the nations of both Syria and the northern kingdom of

Israel. ***If you will not believe:*** This was an opportunity for God to call on Ahaz to believe what He was saying through His prophet, Isaiah. If he did not believe, he would be taken out.

7:10-17 Since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Isaiah gave his own sign. ***Depth ... height:*** Possibly from Sheol to heaven, though some suggest that reference is from the earth to heaven. ***I will not ask:*** Ahaz probably did not want to commit himself to God's scheme of things. If he asked for the sign, and it was given, then he had committed himself to follow God's course of action (Compare Ex 17:2; Dt 6:16). If Isaiah made the request, then Ahaz could say that it was Isaiah's scheme. It seems that at this time Ahaz had already determined to make an alliance with Assyria in order to resist the attack of Rezin and Pekah. He was determined to trust in Assyria and not God. ***A virgin will conceive:*** The immediate context of this statement is that a young woman would conceive, and then bear a son. Before this baby passed through its younger years, the nations of Syria and the northern kingdom, Israel, would have gone into captivity by the hands of the Assyrians. ***Virgin:*** The Septuagint, which was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, used the Greek word "virgin" in this verse to translate the Hebrew word *almah*, meaning a young maiden of marriageable age. The Hebrew word *bethulah*, which specifically means a virgin, is not used. The reason it is not used was for the purpose of making this prophecy two fold. The Holy Spirit sanctioned

the Septuagint translation by Matthew's quotation of the verse in reference to Jesus in Matthew 1:22,23. Because the prophecy was quoted in reference to Jesus, then we would conclude that there was a double prophecy made by Isaiah. The first fulfillment was in reference to Isaiah's immediate historical context, and the second was in reference to the Messiah, Jesus, who was born of a virgin. The difference between the two births, therefore, was that the child that was born in Isaiah's time was not of a virgin birth, but Jesus' birth was of the virgin Mary. ***Immanuel:*** Or, "God with us." ***Know to refuse evil and choose good:*** This would be before the child was of the age where he would be accountable for his decisions in reference to right and wrong.

7:18-25 ***Fly ... bee:*** The Egyptian gadfly and the Assyrian bumblebee would infest the hills and valleys of Judah. ***Razor:*** As the hired barber would shave clean the head and beard of a man, so would the Assyrian army shave through the kingdoms to the north in order to clean the earth of them. The Assyrians would also shave Judah of her fields and productivity outside the walls of Jerusalem. People would have to live on subsistence diets in order to survive. The land would be deserted, and thus cultivation would cease. The land would go back to the wild where wild animals would roam. Because the inhabitants would flee from the land, unattended livestock would wander throughout the land. The invading Assyrians would take the northern kingdom into captivity, but the devastation of Judah would be a warn-

ing to the southern kingdom that they should repent and return to God. Judah would suffer the consequences of Ahaz's decision to trust in the Assyrians and not in God.

Chapter 8

8:1-4 Mahershalalhasbaz: Some translations place the meaning of this name in the text of verse 1, with the name being stated in verse 2. The meaning of the name was prophetic, meaning, "speed to the spoil," or "hasten to the booty." The child's name would be prophetic of the downfall of Syria and Samaria by the Assyrians. The plundering would reach even to the walls of Jerusalem. Two witnesses were to verify the prophecy with their signatures. **Uriah:** This was possibly the high priest (2 Kg 16:10-16). He would have been a witness who was more in agreement with Ahaz. **Zechariah:** This was possibly the father of Ahaz's wife (2 Kg 18:2; 2 Ch 29:1). This witness, also, would not be in favor of Isaiah's prophecy. But they had to give their witness to the prophecy, and thus would be forced to confess to the accuracy of its fulfillment. **Prophetess:** Isaiah's wife. **Damascus ... Samaria:** These two capitals represented their nations. Before the child of the prophet and prophetess could speak, Assyria, through its king, Tiglath-pileser, would ravage both Syria and Israel.

8:6-10 Because of Ahaz's trust in Assyria, and not God, Judah would pay the price for his faithlessness. Assyria would come from her home on the Euphrates River, pass through Syria and Is-

rael, and then overflow into the land of Judah. **Shiloah:** This was a large spring of water southeast of the main city of Jerusalem. Instead of trusting in the gentle peace and security that comes from God, Ahaz and Judah would experience a flood of the Assyrians who would devastate the land. **Gird:** All those who would put on their armor and swords would be overcome by the invading Assyrians. **Counsel together:** Even if countries would make alliances in order to muster their armies against the strength of the Assyrian army, they would be conquered. God was using the Assyrian army as His proxy judgment on both Syria and Israel. No army, therefore, could stand against His plan to judge these two nations, and finally, devastate the countryside of Judah.

8:11-15 Conspiracy: Or, treason. Isaiah was exhorted by God not to give in to the majority opinion of the people. When they cried out that all was a conspiracy against the nation, he was to remember that what was about to happen was the work of God. When people put their nation before God, they are doomed. **Fear:** Godly men must fear God more than they fear men. They must fear God more than the popular beliefs of ungodly societies. **A stone to strike and a rock to stumble over:** Israel would stumble over the rock of God's will (Ez 11:16). This historical event would happen again when Jesus, as God's manifestation on earth, was the occasion over which the Jews again stumbled in unbelief (Mt 21:44). Belief in their traditional religiosity was stronger than their willingness

to accept Jesus as the Messiah (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

8:16-18 Isaiah sealed the written prophecy and entrusted it to his disciples. He proclaimed the prophetic meaning of the names of his two sons as signs, and then waited for God to bring to pass the fulfillment of the prophecy.

8:19-22 The evidence of a society that has turned away from God is when the people listen to supposed spooks and spirits that are the figment of their own imaginations (See comments Hs 4:6). Mature people with faith in God understand that God created our minds with the ability to imagine unreal fantasies by which we can bring ourselves into the bondage of our own fears. But instead of consulting God through His word, the people in Isaiah's day ran to those who were leading them astray by their presumptuous beliefs. They consulted the fantasies of their imaginations in order to find an answer for the calamities of life. They were sorely wrong in believing such fantasies. **No light in them:** Those who do not base their beliefs and behavior on the law of God, have no light in them. Those who base their beliefs on their own imaginations, have no security or hope for others. Only the word of God is a solid foundation upon which we can base our beliefs.

Chapter 9

9:1-7 Verse 1 in the Hebrew text is a part of the context of chapter 8, and thus should be 8:23. **A great light:** Isaiah pictures the reign of the Messiah who brings an era of light and peace. This

would be the time of the restored remnant as they submit to the kingdom reign of the Messiah. **For unto us a child is born:** Isaiah prophesied that the "Prince of peace" would sit on the throne of David. This Prince would exercise sovereign rule. He would establish the sovereignty by exercising judgment and justice. Luke 1:31-33 is a record of the angel's statement to Mary concerning the child to whom she would give birth. Her child Jesus would reign on the throne of David (Lk 1:32). Heavenly authority was given to Jesus (Mt 28:18). With this authority He reigned "*over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Lk 1:33). The Hebrew writer quoted Psalm 45:6,7 in Hebrews 1:8. "*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.*" This was prophesied in Psalm 45 and fulfilled in Jesus as He sat upon the throne of David in the heavenly places when He ascended to the Father (Ep 1:20-23). The Hebrew writer correctly concluded, "*Now this is the main point of the thing we are saying: We have such a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*" (Hb 8:1). Jesus has fulfilled Isaiah 9. He is now ruling with all kingly authority as head over all things and as King of kings (See Mt 28:18; 1 Tm 6:15). **Mighty God:** Since Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah 9, then He is referred to as God in verse 6. Jesus was an earthly manifestation of the triune God. **Prince of peace:** Isaiah prophesied that the "Prince of peace" would sit upon the throne of David. This

Prince would exercise sovereign rule. He would establish a sovereignty of judgment and justice. Jesus is now reigning as the Prince of Peace over all things in heaven and on earth.

THE DOOM OF SAMARIA

9:8-12 *Pride and arrogance:* Their prosperity had made them feel self-sufficient, and in feeling self-sufficient, they felt that they did not need the help of God. But such arrogance led them into sin, and thus brought on the judgment of God. ***Word ... fallen on Israel:*** This was God's word of judgment of the northern kingdom. ***Ephraim:*** This major tribe of the north was representative of the entire northern kingdom. ***We will build:*** Their arrogance was manifested in their self-reliance. They felt that they could stand on their own strength, and thus did not need the power of God. ***Rezin:*** Once the Assyrians conquered Syria, the Syrians were compelled to join with the Assyrians against the northern kingdom of Israel. Thus the Assyrians, with the Syrians and Philistines, fought against Israel who was caught in between their foes.

9:13-17 Both royalty and common people would suffer from the national calamity that was to come. No one would be spared. The entire culture of the northern kingdom became wicked, and thus it was a nation that had to suffer the consequences of wicked behavior.

8:18-21 The nation was imploding, and thus rivalry moved them to strive against one another. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were descendants of Joseph. Both tribes set themselves

against Judah. They were thus consumed by their own wicked behavior against one another. ***Fuel:*** The people were their own fuel, for they had set themselves against one another. When a society becomes evil in its very nature, the citizens turn against one another. ***He will eat:*** In their strife, they were destroying their own brothers. They had moved so far away from their loyalty to one another as the tribes who descended from Jacob, that they fought against one another as rival nations (See comments Mt 10:21,36; Mk 13:12). They moved from being autonomous from one another to the point of destroying one another. ***His hand is stretched out:*** This was God's hand of judgment upon His people.

Chapter 10

10:1-4 The government, with the judges and courts, had become corrupt and unjust. Laws were established that had no regard for the law of God by which they should have been basing their code of conduct. Their laws were twisted and prejudicial toward the poor, widows and orphans. Their courts were means by which they could oppress the people. Simply because a government existed, did not mean that the government was righteous. In the case of apostate Israel, their government was sinful. Governments that write constitutions that are contrary to the moral principles of God's law, are enacting on the people ungodly principles. ***Day of visitation:*** This was the time when God would come on them with destruction through the Assyrian army. When God visits, it is for judg-

ment. **Leave your glory:** When God came in judgment, they could not hide their material possessions in which they took pride. The excess of their material prosperity turned them to competing individually with one another. This led to a lack of concern for others as they competed with one another in order to profit more from one another.

THE DOOM OF ASSYRIA

10:5-11 Rod of My anger: Assyria was the instrument of judgment by which God judged Israel. Though Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, did not know this, God was working through him at the right time in history in order to bring him as a rod of punishment upon Israel. God used an ungodly nation to judge what was supposed to be a godly nation. **Ungodly nation:** Israel's punishment resulted from the ungodly nature of their government leaders and culture. **Carchemish ... Arpad ... Damascus:** The Assyrian king became arrogant in taking credit for his victories over these capital cities that were north of Israel. He took credit for what God had actually accomplished in making it possible for him to conquer these kingdoms. **Kingdoms of the idols:** The idols represented the strength of a particular kingdom. They represented the spiritual and moral confidence of a nation, and thus the gods of the nations were national gods. They were symbols of patriotism. The idol gods had been created after the patriotic imagination of each nation in order to maintain the loyalty of the people. Thus when the nation fell, the idol god fell. Assyria arrogantly

assumed that her idol god was superior to the gods of the nations they had conquered. What they did not know was that the true God of heaven was using them to do His work. What the Assyrians would eventually realize was that their idol gods were not able to deliver them from the Babylonians.

10:12-14 I will punish: God brought the Assyrian Empire into existence for the purpose of bringing judgment on the apostate Israel. Once the judgment was rendered, there was no more need for the Assyrians. God took them out in order to raise up another nation (the Babylonian Empire) that would in time be used as Assyria in order to bring judgment on Judah. Thus God used pagan nations in order to work all things in history in order to bring about His purpose for the existence of the world and the destiny of Israel.

10:15-19 God's judgment on Assyria for their arrogance will almost bring them to annihilation. There will be so few standing that a child can count them. However, Israel will survive the onslaught of this fierce nation. Though Assyria would be destroyed because of her arrogance against God's people, she would no longer be left as a nation. All that is left of the great Assyrian Empire today are stone monuments.

10:20-23 The remnant: This word introduces a very significant theme throughout the prophets. God never intended that in His judgment of Israel He would wipe them out of existence. In order that the promises be fulfilled that He made to the fathers, a remnant had to

be restored to the promised land for the coming of the Messiah (See Gn 12:1-3). **Rely on the Lord:** Ahaz had made an alliance with Assyria in order to gain protection from Israel and Syria to the north. But when considering the remnant that would eventually return after both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the people would no longer trust in earthly kings. They would once again be restored to God only as their king. They would once again restore a theocratic government which they had before they cried out for a king on earth as the nations around them.

10:24-27 In the message of the destruction that was to come upon Israel through the army of Assyria, there was a message of hope. Israel, therefore, must not fear of annihilation. It would be the Assyrians who would suffer such destruction. A remnant would remain of Israel. Since this prophecy was directed specifically to the northern ten tribes of Israel, then we must conclude that a remnant of all twelve tribes would be restored. None would be lost forever among the nations. No tribe would go into annihilation. **The anointing:** Because Israel was a nation that was playing a part in God's eternal scheme of redemption, she would always survive until God had carried out His plan. When the plan was completed, then national Israel would lose her identity in the spiritual Israel of God (See comments Gl 3:26-29).

10:28-34 **The Lord ... will lop off the bough with terror:** As the bough, a large branch of a tree, is lopped off, God

would lop off Assyria. Assyria became arrogant because of the great accomplishments in battle that God had granted to her. Unfortunately, she sought to advance too far against the people of God. Sennacherib brought his army to the gates of Jerusalem in order to continue the conquest of Judah. However, it was not the time for Judah to fall. She had not digressed in sin as Israel to the north. God would give Judah a little over one hundred years more of existence before bringing the Babylonians as His proxy judgment against Jerusalem. But until then, it was determined by God that Judah would not fall to the Assyrians during the days of Isaiah. Thus when the Assyrians came to take Jerusalem, Hezekiah, the king of Judah turned to God. God then sent His Angel to kill in one night 185,000 Assyrians. Sennacherib, Assyria's king at the time, returned in disgrace to Nineveh where he was eventually assassinated (37:36-38; 2 Kg 19:35-37).

Chapter 11

GATHERING OF THE REMNANT

11:1-5 This chapter is key to the Messianic messages of Isaiah. The Messiah would shoot from the stem of the house of Jesse. He would be a branch from the family roots. He would go forth with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Spirit of wisdom:** He would give right judgments in contrast to the prejudicial judgments that were made by the government officials of Israel at this time in their history. **Spirit of understanding:** He would be able to execute judgments that were

based on a correct evaluation of all things. He would be able to distinguish what was true and right in all matters of life, regardless of whether one was rich or poor. ***Spirit of counsel:*** He would make impartial judgments by imparting liberating counsel to those who were oppressed. ***Spirit of ... might:*** His destiny would be established, from which destiny He would not detour because of His strong character. He would not vacillate as the kings of the nations among which Israel existed at the time of the writing of this message. ***Spirit of knowledge:*** He would come with the knowledge of God for man. ***Spirit of the fear of the Lord:*** He would come doing the Father's will, from which He would not turn away. He would be obedient in all things. ***Reprove with equity:*** In all things He would render just judgment and show fairness to all. He would be a relief from the unfair judgments that were made by judges who took bribes. ***Righteousness:*** He would be encircled with that which is right, for in Him there would be no sin. Under the reign of the Branch, justice would be equal for all, for all would be considered equal, regardless of positions or possessions.

11:6-9 These verses describe the relational environment that the Branch would produce among men. In the historical context it is hard to escape the fact that Isaiah was speaking of the return of the remnant from captivity. This conclusion is indicated by the content of verses 10-16. However, a metaphorical understanding would be that Isaiah was looking beyond the event of the restoration of the remnant. For this reason, in using

metaphors of an earthly environment wherein there would be no dangers or strife, this could be a description of the spiritual environment of the church. Since the ones to whom Isaiah wrote had no existing environment that would define the spiritual environment of the church, Isaiah used what was probably the environment of Eden. He did so in order to picture the social environment that the Messiah would produce among those who would be the spiritual Israel on earth, the church (Compare comments Rv 21).

11:10-16 *Gentiles will seek Him:* The nation of Israel was to be the banner of the Lord to the nations. However, they forsook that responsibility before they went into captivity. Those who would return from the captivity would proclaim to the world that God was with His people. The root of Jesse, Jesus, would draw the Gentiles to Him through the preaching of the gospel to all the Gentile ethnic groups throughout the world (See comments Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15,16). ***To recover the remnant of His people:*** There would be a literal return of a remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel to the land. They would return for the purpose of receiving the Messiah who would come from the root of Jesse. None of the prophets ever spoke of a national assembly of every Israelite in Palestine after the captivities. Only a remnant of each tribe would return. Herein is described the representatives of some of the tribes who would return to Palestine within the one hundred years after they were first freed from captivity by Cyrus,

king of the Medo-Persian Empire. There was a remnant of every tribe within the three returns that started in 586 B.C. (See comments Ez & Ne). God brought back the remnant in order that an identified national Israel be in existence in Palestine at the time of the coming of the Branch who would sit on the throne of David. Thus the promises and prophecies that were made to the fathers of Israel were identified as fulfilled. **Judah will not harass Ephraim:** Their autonomy from one another had led to tribal strife among themselves, which strife led them down a road to God's judgment. **They will fly:** The picture here is based on the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian captivity. **Sea of Egypt:** The Red Sea. **River:** Possibly, the Nile. Taken from the exodus of Egypt, the Israelites would come again as a united nation from the opposite direction. They would come from former Assyrian territory, from the land of the Euphrates River.

Chapter 12

12:1-6 This is the conclusion to the preceding preaching and prophecy of Isaiah concerning the return of the remnant and the Messiah. This chapter includes two songs that the returnees were to sing because of their deliverance from captivity. From the time Isaiah wrote these words, it would be about 200 years before the songs would be sung. The song of verses 1 & 2 is a thanksgiving song that is to be sung to God for His deliverance. The song of verse 4 is a song that gives thanks to God for His work among the nations in order that the de-

liverance of Israel be seen as the work of God. When one takes time to see all that God has done in his personal life, he too can sing to the nations the great things that God does in the lives of His people. God asked Israel that they testify to the fact that it was God who worked the wonder of their return. He would ask us to give Him praise by letting others know what He has done for us in delivering us from the bondage of sin (See comments Lk 8:39; 2 Co 4:15).

Judgment Of Neighboring Nations (13:1 – 23:18)

Outline: (1) Judgment of Babylon (13:1 – 14:23), (2) Judgment of Assyria (14:24-27), (3) Judgment of Philistia (14:28-32), (4) Judgment of Moab (15:1 – 16:14), (5) Judgment of Damascus (17:1-3), (6) Judgment of Israel (17:4-14), (7) Judgment of Ethiopia and Egypt (18:1 – 20:6), (8) Judgment of Babylon (21:1-10), (9) Judgment of Edom and Arabia (21:11-17), (10) Judah's sin (22:1-14), (11) Message against Shebna (22:15-25), (12) Judgment of Tyre (23:1-18)

Chapter 13

JUDGMENT OF BABYLON

13:1-5 At the time of this prophecy, the Babylonian Empire had not yet come on the scene of world history as a major power. **Burden:** Those nations that lifted up their hand against the people of God had to bear the burden of destruction that came from the Lord. Thus Isaiah here gives a pronouncement of doom of Babylon. **Sanctified ones:** These were those nations that God used to bring destruc-

tion on other nations. In the historical context of Babylon, the ones set apart by God to bring judgment upon them was the Medo-Persian Empire. After God used the Babylonians to judge Judah, He then used the Medo-Persians to judge Babylon.

13:6-16 Day of the Lord: This was a time of judgment in time upon those people and nations that God was judging. It was a time of destruction from the Lord. When the destruction came on Babylon, there would be no resistance. Historical records state that there were no major battles when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian Empire. **Stars ... sun ... moon:** This is judgment on the high officials of the government. They would no longer send forth their influence over the people of the kingdom they ruled. They would be punished for their evil. Their arrogant attitudes brought on the judgment. In the judgment, therefore, they would be humbled. Arrogant tyrants who handed down injustice to the people would themselves be judged justly for their wickedness. **Every man will return to his own people:** As a stampede of wild animals, those who were expatriates in Babylon would flee Babylon to their home countries in order to escape the fall of the empire.

13:17-22 Medes: Centuries before these events took place, Isaiah named those who would be God's "sanctified ones" who would bring to an end the Babylonian Empire. **Not value silver ... gold:** When the Medes and Persians joined in a united force against the Babylonian Empire, they would not be stopped

by any tribute that might be offered by the Babylonians. **No pity:** The Medo-Persian army had no mercy in bringing down the Babylonian Empire. **Sodom and Gomorrah:** As these two cities remained uninhabited for centuries after their destruction, so would Babylon. The Arabian bedouins would not pitch their tents there or use the area to pasture their flocks. The entire region would be haunted by wild beast who roamed freely throughout the territory where the famous city was located.

Chapter 14

14:1,2 When God brought judgment on Israel, Babylon was used as His proxy judge. However, Israel's restoration meant that Babylon had been judged. God would have mercy on His people, and thus restore them to the land of their possession. **Captors captive:** Reference here could be to the deliverance of Israel during Esther's time, and/or to the time when the remnant left Babylonian territory under the direction of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus. A decree was written by Cyrus to allow the Jewish captives to return to the land. When they prepared for their journey back, those of the old Babylonian nation were to aid them in whatever way possible. The Jews were exalted over the Babylonians because of the decrees of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus.

14:3-11 Verses 5-24 are a taunt of the Babylonians. The world tyrant was to be brought down, down to sheol and the worms that consume dead bodies. The staff of Babylon's wicked and harsh

manner by which she dealt with other nations is to be broken. The scepter of authority by which she reigned over other countries has fallen. The nations are at peace because the Empire has fallen. The Babylonian Empire represented an era of empires that conquered in order to plunder. The Medo-Persian Empire conquered in order to rule and bring peace among conflicting nations (See comments Ez & Ne). **Trees rejoice:** The personification is that the invading Babylonian army would no longer cut down trees in order to conquer cities. **Sheol:** Those who have already passed to the grave taunted the arrogant Babylonian leaders who also had now been brought down to the grave. Death is the great equalizer.

14:12-21 These verses continue the taunt of Babylon, and specifically the arrogant king of Babylon. **Morning star:** This is a reference to the one identified in verse 16 as the man who made the nations of the world tremble. Though the king of Babylon exalted himself to the position of a god, he was humbled and humiliated to sheol. He was a morning star that brought light by his power and influence, but quickly was brought down to darkness by God. He made the nations of the world tremble. Now he must tremble in sheol for the eternal condemnation to come (Mt 25:41). **All the kings of the nations:** Those whom Babylon humbled were buried with honor, but the morning star of Babylon suffered the abomination of being trodden under foot by men. **Destroyed your land ... people:** When evil rulers take control of their

countries for their own benefit, they have little concern for the people. They will sacrifice the people for the sake of continuing in power. **His children:** The children will not bear the guilt of their wicked fathers, but they will suffer the consequences of their sinful actions. The family of the wicked king of Babylon had to suffer the consequences of their wicked father.

14:22,23 God's judgment is just because those who are judged with condemnation have brought condemnation on themselves by their wicked deeds.

JUDGMENT OF ASSYRIA

14:24-27 This brief statement in reference to Assyria places the beginning of God's judgments on the nations (Assyria and Babylon) in the historical context of the imminent fall of the northern kingdom and threat of the southern kingdom. Assyria would take the north captive. Babylon would later take the south. Both nations were arrogantly bringing destruction upon God's people. In the same prophecy concerning the doom of the captors, Assyria is briefly mentioned with Babylon. Both Assyria and Babylonia would be judged for arrogantly laying their hands on God's people. **Surely as I have thought:** Nothing would deter the coming judgment upon Assyria. The doom was certain because God knew that they would not repent of their wickedness.

JUDGMENT OF PHILISTIA

14:28-32 See 2 Ch 28:18-27. It is difficult to determine the exact date of the death of Ahaz. He could have died

anywhere from 727 to 716 B.C. **Do not rejoice:** The Assyrian's threat of Philistia was broken with the death of Tiglath-pileser. They must not rejoice, however, for their rejoicing will be premature. **Serpent's root:** Sargon succeeded Tiglath-pileser, and was a more vicious king. **Flying serpent:** Sennacherib succeeded Sargon, and then ravaged southern Palestine, including Philistia. Though there would be a remnant of Israel, there would be no survivors of Philistia. In the destruction to come upon Philistia, even the poor of God's people would be better off than Philistia. God's remnant can find refuge in the Lord, but the Philistines have no one in whom they can trust. Their gods would not deliver them.

Chapter 15

JUDGMENT OF MOAB

15:1-9 The two principal cities of Moab would fall in one night. The Moabites would thus shave their heads and cut off their beards. They would wail while clothed in garments that manifested deep sorrow. They would ascend to their idols on the high places, but there would be no answer from their false gods. **My heart will cry out for Moab:** Isaiah had sympathy for Moab. He realized that God would bring great suffering on this land. Even those who would escape the battles would face calamity. They would face calamity because the places to which they would flee would also be turned to waste lands. And though they fled, the rivers would run red with blood as the conquering soldiers ran them down.

Chapter 16

16:1-5 Moab's only hope was to send to Judah a peace offering from Petra (Sela) to which they had fled. They would do this in order to find refuge for themselves as fugitives. Throughout their early history, Moab was not hospitable to Israel in the days after Israel's wilderness wandering when they were approaching the land of Canaan. Now Moab, in her own wilderness wandering, would plead for sanctuary from Israel. The historical tables were to be turned. **Hide the outcasts:** Isaiah asked for Israel to be the forgiving relative, for the Moabites were also descendants from Abraham. **In mercy the throne will be established:** God has no mercy on those who show no mercy (Js 2:13). If Judah shows mercy to her relatives, the Moabites, then she herself would receive mercy. The throne of David would thus be continued because it had been established on a foundation of mercy.

16:6,7 Moab was known for being arrogant and haughty. But within a few years from the time of this prophecy, he would be humbled. His cry to Israel for help must be heard and responded to with mercy, not judgment.

16:8-12 The food supply of Moab would be destroyed. When the attacking destroyer came upon him, the battle shout would replace the shout for joy they made during their harvests. When the enemy was upon them, the Moabites cried out to their god Chemosh, but there was no reply. For Isaiah, it was a pitiful sight to see men cry out to a god they had created after their own imagination. When

men create gods that conform to their own beliefs, they cry out to these gods only when they are in trouble.

16:13,14 *Word that the Lord has spoken:* See Nm 24:17; Dt 23:3,4. *Years of a hireling:* As a servant counts the days of his contract in order to fulfill the exact number of days of labor, so the proclamation made concerning Moab would be for a definite period of time.

Chapter 17

JUDGMENT OF DAMASCUS

17:1-3 Syria had made an alliance with Israel, the northern kingdom, in order to bring Judah in with them to defend themselves against the Assyrians. Isaiah's message to those in Judah was that both Syria and Israel would fall, which fall came in 734 B.C. Damascus, the capital of Syria, would be destroyed to the extent that it would become an open range for the grazing of unattended flocks. The destruction of Ephraim, the northern kingdom, would manifest the passing of much of the glory of ten tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, there would still be a remnant that would be restored in the future from the ten tribes of the north.

JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL

17:4-6 Jacob, the northern kingdom, would be reaped by the Assyrians. Her sins had made her ripe for God's judgment. However, though she would be reaped because of her sins, there would be a remnant left as the reaper leaves a few olives on the branches that he cannot reach. *Bough:* The branch of a tree, usually the larger branches.

17:7,8 God's judgment on the northern kingdom, and Israel as a whole, accomplished the purpose for which He allowed them to go into captivity. They had forsaken Him by following after their own desires. Their apostasy was manifested by creating false gods and idols they imagined with their minds, and then crafted with their hands. When the remnant returned from Babylonian captivity many years later, never again did Israel become an idolatrous nation.

17:9-11 Because they had abandoned God, God turned them over to the Assyrians. He had been their salvation since the time of their flight from Egyptian captivity centuries before. But now they had forsaken His protection. They would thus go into captivity where they would labor as slaves in a land of foreign gods. The fruits of their fields would be for another, while their homeland would be left vacant. They had planted in hope in their homeland, but reaped grief and sorrow because of their apostasy.

17:12-14 At the end of the preceding pronouncements of condemnation, comes this note of hope that the Assyrians would also meet their doom. They might sound like the noise of the waves of the sea, or the rushing wind of a storm, but in one night they would come to silence. *Portion ... lot:* The consequence of Assyria's strike against God's people was that 185,000 Assyrians died in one night outside the walls of Jerusalem. They laid their heads down in the evening, not knowing the trouble that was to come. In the morning, they were no

more. Such was God's punishment of those who sought to lay their hand on God's people without the permission of God.

Chapter 18

JUDGMENT OF ETHIOPIA AND EGYPT

18:1-7 The Assyrians were marching to the south from Syria. They had conquered the northern countries, and thus the Ethiopians and Egyptians were greatly concerned. If all of Israel fell, then they would be next. The historical context may be a time when the Ethiopians sent ambassadors to Judah in order to confer with them concerning the threat of the Assyrians. Here they are told that God is working among the nations of the world according to His own plan. What was happening among the nations would not be determined by the alliance of nations with one another. God took His rest in that He was working all things according to His divine plan to discipline Israel, and then restore the repentant remnant for the coming of the Messiah. **Shadowing with wings:** Possibly a reference to the small sail boats of the Nile River. **Rivers:** The Blue and White Nile Rivers. The territory to which reference is made here would include the land from modern Somalia to Egypt. **Tall and bronze:** The Ethiopians were a people of appealing physical features. They were a people of bronze skin and tall in stature. **Gift of homage:** When the Egyptians and Ethiopians, as the rest of the world, see the destruction of the Assyrians, it will be a banner to the world of God's deliverance of Israel. When they

saw the deliverance, they too would bring their gifts of homage to the Lord. The deliverance of the Lord by the sudden death of the 185,000 Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem was not only a deliverance of Judah, but also of Egypt and Ethiopia. The rest of the nations clearly saw that the God of Israel was working for His people in order to deliver them.

Chapter 19

This chapter is divided into two messages. In verses 1-17 Isaiah pictures a nation that digresses into moral degradation and falsehoods. In verses 18-25 he pictures a nation in repentance that is seeking the Lord.

19:1-4 Idols ... tremble: Since the idols were the representation of gods they had created after their own imagination, then their religious and mental security would be shaken at the presence of the true God. **Egyptians against Egyptians:** Egypt was a polytheistic nation. The Egyptians had created gods for every aspect of life. A polytheistic nation, therefore, is easily set against itself because of the confusion that is produced by belief in many gods. Prior to 712 B.C., Egypt was in civil conflict because of the lack of any strong central government. **Consult ... idols ... charmers ... mediums ... sorcerers:** Their religions were fictitious, something that they had created in their own minds. The idols were only the product of their hands. Charmers, mediums and sorcerers were only agents who controlled the feelings and emotions of the people by convincing people that they had power over the unseen world. People who are in digression from truth,

therefore, invent for themselves supposed fantasies by which they seek to help themselves. They are thus led astray by their own imaginations of spirits and demons that exist only in their minds. This is the spirit of idolatry. Those who allow the imagination of their own minds to control their behavior are idolaters. Those who allow imagined spooks and spirits to control their lives through fear, have fallen from the one true and living God. God has revealed through His word how He works among men. Those who refuse to define the work of God through His word have fallen victim to their own imaginations. Those who assume that God has allowed Satan to work mischief among men according to his own will have failed to understand in the word of God the great limitations God has placed on Satan. **A cruel lord:** Those who continue in their ignorance of the true God will elect for themselves officials or misguided spiritual leaders who will be dictators over them. Those who are ignorant can never be free from the oppression of despots, whether religious or political.

19:5-10 Waters: These were the many irrigation canals that the Egyptians dug from the Nile River. **Sea:** The Nile River during the time of its flooding season. **River:** The Nile River. The Nile was the source of life for Egypt. If it dried up, the nation would die, for it was a nation in a desert area. What is pictured is the total collapse of the Egyptian farming industry and businesses. The country would become bankrupt.

19:11-15 Zoan: Or, Tanis. **Coun-**

sellors: Those who were advisers to Pharaoh came to their position through heritage. However, though they descended from those who were counselors, there was no guarantee that they would give wise counsel to Pharaoh. Isaiah proclaimed that they were not giving wise counsel. He challenged them to determine the judgment that God was proclaiming concerning their fate. The counsellors were predicting a prosperous future for the nation, but Isaiah was prophesying doom. **Noph:** Or, Memphis. **Seduced Egypt:** The false prophets of the land deceived the leadership into thinking that there was a bright future for the country. Thus the nation economically and morally staggered as a drunken man.

19:16,17 As a woman who easily fears because she is weak, so will the nation of Egypt be when God brings judgment upon her. Since these words of judgment came from a prophet of Judah, the Egyptians would come to fear the God of Judah. It is only when nations come to fear God that they can restore themselves.

19:18-25 Though national conversion is almost impossible, the picture here is the redemption of Egypt. It did continue to exist as a nation, though the other cities on which the prophets of God pronounced doom ceased to exist. **Language of Canaan:** This could have been the Hebrew language by which the message of hope was proclaimed to Egypt. **City of Righteousness:** The context looks forward to a time when Egypt will turn away from its polytheism in order

to worship the one true God. They would bring offerings to the Lord, which offerings would be accepted because they would make their vows to the Lord and keep them. They would be healed because they responded to the chastisement of the Lord. The result of their healing would be their national communication and commerce with Israel and Assyria that would be of benefit of all the people. **Highway:** Israel was the central trading route between Assyria and Egypt. The communication between Egypt and Assyria to the north would benefit all the nations. God had given Israel the land of Palestine for this very reason. However, they failed to remain faithful to God. God took them away as the highway of commerce between the nations.

Chapter 20

20:1-6 There were some in Jerusalem who thought that they could escape to Egypt. However, since this judgment was coming on Egypt, they could not escape by fleeing to Egypt. **Tartan:** Or, "commander in chief." Ashdod was the gate city in southern Philistia, with Azuria as its king. Azuria refused to submit and pay tribute to Assyria. Coming from the north in 711 B.C., Sargon deposed Azuria and placed his brother Akhishmit on the throne. However, the people rebelled against Akhishmit, and then put Yaman on the throne of Ashdod. This moved Sargon to march his army against Ashdod, defeat it, and then carried off all its riches to Nineveh. **Naked and barefoot:** This was a prophecy that was demonstrated before the people of Judah.

This action prophecy manifested before the people the captives who were going into exile. If this were to be the destiny of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, then certainly Judah should not make any alliance with them.

Chapter 21

JUDGMENT OF BABYLON

21:1-10 The historical setting of this oracle was probably during the rebellion against Assyria by Merodachbaladan that took place in 710 B.C. He had failed in efforts to recruit other nations to help throw off the Assyrian domination. **Wilderness of the Sea:** In ancient writings southern Babylonia was called by this name. The grim revelation that Isaiah saw was Assyria coming off the desert as a hot whirlwind. As the plunderer of nations, she was still doing the same. She would see the plunder of Babylon. Isaiah was stunned at what he saw in the prophecy. His mind reeled with dismay. He saw the Babylonians partying when they should be watchful for the approaching Assyrian army. **Lion:** The roar of a lion demands attention, and thus the watchman did not leave his post. The sounds that were heard were those of a city that was fallen. Babylon had fallen to the Assyrians. **Oh my threshing:** This is an idiomatic statement that refers to the affliction of God's people. They could not make an alliance with the Egyptians and Ethiopians. Neither could they depend on the Babylonians. It was a time when the future of Judah was uncertain. It was uncertain because she was surrounded by the battle cries of the Assyrians who

would seek to take Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood alone, but would not fall to the Assyrians. This was one of God's evidences that He was still working with His people. All the major cities had fallen to Assyria. But Jerusalem would not.

JUDGMENT OF EDMO AND ARABIA

21:11,12 *Dumah*: This is a reference to Edom. The word "Dumah" means "silence." During Assyria's conquest of Ashdod, Edom had sided with Ashdod. Therefore, as Assyria marched against both Palestine and Babylonia, she called to Judah to see if there would be light from the onslaught of the Assyrians. Isaiah's prophetic answer was that when the night of the Assyrians had gone, there would come the Babylonians who would eventually succeed the Assyrians. After them would come the Medo-Persians and other world empires as the Greeks and Romans. There was thus no hope for Edom.

21:13-15 During the Assyrians' era of domination, the Arabian caravans that roamed in trading throughout the area southeast of Jerusalem, would be interrupted. They could not use their normal trade routes between the Persian Gulf, Palestine and Egypt. The Assyrians disrupted all trade. The traders were forced to flee to thickets and caves.

21:16,17 The prophecy is that the nomadic warriors of Arabia would be wiped out within the time that Isaiah revealed. ***Kedar*:** Compare Gn 25:13-15. This was possibly the area east of the Dead Sea. It was the central region of

the northern part of the Arabian peninsula.

Chapter 22 JUDAH'S SIN

22:1-7 The historical background of this prophecy is possibly 701 B.C. when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, temporarily left his focus on Jerusalem and pursued the remnant of the Egyptian army after he defeated them at Eltekeh. He sent part of his army to ravage the countryside of Judah, and then threaten Jerusalem. There may have been celebrations in Jerusalem when he turned his focus toward the Egyptians. Isaiah knew that it was not a time for rejoicing since Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's commander of officers, would be at the gates of Jerusalem, demanding a total surrender.

***Housetops*:** They were celebrating on their housetops. ***I will weep bitterly*:** When the cowardly leaders fled, the people would be left vulnerable to the enemy. It was in view of this sad scenario that Isaiah wept over the city. ***Elam ... Kir*:** These two armies of the Assyrians would advance on Jerusalem. They would set themselves against the gates of the city.

22:8-11 *House of the forest*: This was a strong house that was built by Solomon. ***Waters of the lower pool*:** Hezekiah had repaired the walls (2 Ch 32:5) and dug a tunnel to bring the water from the outside of the walls into the city (See "Hezekiah's Tunnel" in *Encyclopedic Study Guide*). Many other defensive preparations were made in order to prepare for an attack. ***Maker*:** In

all their preparations, they failed to trust in God who would defend them against the attack of any enemy.

22:12-14 It was a time when they should have been fasting and praying in repentance, but they were feasting with joy, trusting in themselves. **Let us eat and drink:** This was a flippant statement made by those who scoffed at the prophecy of Isaiah.

MESSAGE AGAINST SHEBNA

22:15-19 Shebna was possibly a foreigner over the king's palace. He had probably said that the Egyptians would defeat the Assyrians and all would be well. He had cut out a tomb for his own burial, thinking that he would live out his life in peace in Jerusalem. But Isaiah said that he was about to go into captivity and die in a foreign land. He would go into captivity as a result of his sinful leadership of the people.

22:20-25 Eliakim: The responsibility that Shebna carried would be transferred to Eliakim. He would be the benefactor to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. **Key:** He would receive the authority to govern the people. In this prophecy, the "key," or authority of the house of David, would be given to One in the future who had the power to open and shut. The word "key" is used as a metaphor to represent authority. A literal key is something that unlocks. The one who possesses a literal key has the authority to literally unlock that which is concealed. As a metaphor, the one with the key has the authority to unlock what is concealed from men. Isaiah 22:22 was first fulfilled

in Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah. However, Isaiah had something greater in mind as he pointed Israel to another era in the future. The One coming would be given the authority to "unlock." The One who would be coming would have "all authority" over all things in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). Isaiah prophesied that the key of the house of David would be given to the King to come. The angel of Revelation 3:7 stated that Jesus presently has this key of authority. *"These things says He who is holy and true, who has the key of David. He opens and no one shuts, and no one opens."* The Greek present tense in Revelation 3:7 indicates that at the time of the writing of Revelation, Jesus had the key of David. At the time John wrote, it was not something He was yet to receive in the future. He received this key after His resurrection when He ascended to the throne in heaven to receive dominion, glory and kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). He now has heavenly authority (Mt 28:18). **Nail ... removed:** In verses 23-25 Isaiah takes our minds back to the immediate historical context of Eliakim. His heritage would be nailed in a sure place. However, his worthless and incompetent descendants would cause his family to fall. They would disgrace his family, and thus the family would be brought down because of their sin. The nepotism of many officials has brought down their ministry.

Chapter 23

JUDGMENT OF TYRE

This prophecy speaks of the fall (vss 1-14) and restoration of the city of Tyre

(vss 15-18). The calamity of Tyre began in the days of the Assyrian conquest of Palestine and continued to the days of Nebuchadnezzar when the Babylonian Empire became a world power. Its restoration came after the return of the captives during the Medo-Persian Empire, and continued throughout the days of the Greek Empire.

23:1-7 *Ships ... harbor:* King Hiram, who was contemporary with Solomon, made Tyre one of the best port cities of all Palestine, and throughout the Mediterranean Sea. It was an ancient city that was fortified about 250 years before King Solomon. Phoenician ships left the harbor of Tyre and sailed to as far as Tarshish of Spain. ***Chittim:*** Reference is primarily to Cyprus. ***Sidon:*** This was the mother city of Tyre. ***River:*** The Nile River of Egypt. Tyre was a port city that harbored a vast trading business throughout the Mediterranean Sea. Its wealth was in its trading of goods that were brought from the other countries of the Mediterranean. Countries to the east of Tyre and Sidon came for trade with merchant ships that brought goods from the west. ***Market of nations:*** When the Assyrians conquered the territory to the east of the coastal city of Tyre, then the traders could no longer come to buy goods from Tyre that had come from the west. The trading business thus failed, as did Tyre. If the traders from the east were cut off, then the Mediterranean nations ceased to trade with merchants from Tyre.

23:8-14 Tyre was laid desolate because of the decline in commerce. The

fulfillment of this prophecy came about in a manner by which the people living in Tyre and Sidon would not perceive that it was the work of God among the nations of the world. Since God was using Assyria to discipline the northern kingdom of Israel, the economic result of Assyria's advance on Israel resulted in the interruption of all trade through Tyre and Sidon. The residents of Tyre and Sidon would not have attributed this economic downturn to God's working in the nations since they would not have believed in the work of God through Isaiah. The economic fall of Tyre and Sidon was collateral judgment upon these two cities who failed to have God in their conscience. And so it is today when nations fail to consider God as He works among the nations of the world. ***Shook the kingdoms:*** Though we do not perceive the direct hand of God in working among the nations, we must always be conscious of the fact that God is working all things according to His eternal plan. When God shakes the nations, it is for a purpose. That purpose is to bring His people into eternal dwelling. For this reason, God's people must not become dismayed when the nations are shaken, but give glory to God for working in this world for the sake of His people. ***The Chaldeans:*** The Babylonian Empire had its seed beginnings with the Assyrians. In 710 B.C. Sargon, king of Assyria, conquered the city of Babylon. However, in 705 B.C. the Babylonians regained their independence. But again, in 704 B.C. Sennacherib of Assyria again conquered the city. He did so again in 700 B.C.,

and then made his son the viceroy of the city. Isaiah's illustration in reference to the Chaldeans in the context of this prophecy was that Tyre should not get their hopes up. She will be as Babylon under the Assyrians.

23:15-18 70 years: This would be a figurative number referring to a time of national calamity, after which there would be a time of restoration. After the 70 years that was designated for the national calamity of Judah in Babylonian captivity, the Medo-Persians overcame the Babylonian Empire. Tyre also would be restored as a commercial trading port for the Medo-Persian Empire after its years of calamity. However, when Alexander the Great swept across the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, he laid siege to Tyre in 332 B.C. The fortified island city was conquered and its inhabitants were deported to Carthage. The former joyous city then became a heap of ruins. **Make sweet melody:** As a harlot would rejoice in the restoration of her financial gain, so Tyre would be restored once again to prosper from her trade among the nations. But her trade would be restored only because God was working in the nations.

Divine Sovereignty Manifested Through Judgment (24:1 – 27:13)

Outline: (1) Judgment to come (24:1-23), (2) Reasons for Judah to praise God (25:1-12), (3) The captives are set free (26:1-21), (4) Judgment and preservation (27:1-13)

Chapter 24

JUDGMENT TO COME

The content of this chapter may have been written either as apocalyptic literature in reference to the general outcome of all things, or it may be prophetic in that it refers to something specific in the future. Apocalyptic literature incorporates many metaphors. It is the challenge of the Bible student to understand the metaphors by understanding the literal basis from which the metaphors were drawn. Though prophetic language contains many symbols and metaphors, both the audience to whom the prophecy is directed, and the recipients, have enough experiential background from which the symbolism was derived. There is enough information to identify the meaning of the metaphor in order to make a correct conclusion concerning the fulfillment of the prophecy. But in reference to apocalyptic literature, Bible students are often over zealous to attach speculative interpretations to the symbols and metaphors, and consequently they often allow their present circumstances to be the foundation upon which they make their interpretations. If we would conclude that this is apocalyptic literature with a general picture of chaotic times, then it would apply to the social and national conditions that were relevant to Isaiah's audience. But the general principles of God's work among the nations would also have application to different periods of social chaos and national calamity throughout history (See intro. to Rv).

24:1-6 Scatters: Whenever there is a national calamity, there are refugees.

National calamity touches all citizens of a nation. No one can escape the trauma of national economic chaos. In the interlinked world today, the entire world is affected by those first world economies upon which the world depends. ***The earth:*** What the prophet envisioned was calamity that would come upon the earth. We know that this will eventually happen at the end of time (2 Pt 3). However, we do not know if this is the meaning that we should attach to this context. The apocalyptic statement here may have been given in order that individual nations come to the conclusion that if the whole world would suffer from such a calamity, then certainly individual nations would come to the same fate. ***Because they have transgressed:*** Man brings upon himself his own calamity. God allows nations to destroy themselves. But because He is working all things together for His purpose, He assumes the responsibility. He does so because He could have prevented nations from going into chaos and destructions. However, we must keep in mind that in the historical context of what was happening in reference to Israel, God was working in order to preserve a remnant of Israel for the entrance of the Messiah into the world. ***The curse has devoured the earth:*** Man cursed himself with sin in the garden of Eden. He reaps what he sows, and thus brings destruction to society, and indirectly, the entire world at the end of time.

24:7-13 The party is over. Confusion prevails. There is chaos in the streets and the people barricade themselves in

their homes. The survivors hide themselves in fear of intruders. The joy of the land is gone and the very last glean- ing grape (joy) is taken away.

24:14-20 ***They will sing:*** There is hope in the midst of a prophetic picture of destruction. The righteous remnant will emerge. ***Dawning light:*** This would be a reference to the rising sun in the east. The righteous remnant would come back to Jerusalem from the east out of Babylonian captivity. The songs of praises would again come to the city. ***Sea:*** The Mediterranean Sea. ***Dealt treacherously:*** Isaiah turns to those in society who took advantage of others. They were thieves who were brazenly going about stealing from others. A society is broken when it begins to morally implode. When those in a society turn on themselves, chaos and calamity follow. Isaiah's picture is that when the hunted try to escape they are themselves entrapped. ***Earth is utterly broken:*** See 2:19; Am 1:1. An earthquake emotionally shakes people. The social chaos that prevails leaves people hopeless and confused. They emotionally go about as a staggering drunk. The cause of emotional instability is sin. Man brings on himself his own social chaos and destruction.

24:21-23 This apocalyptic picture is reminiscent of Matthew 25:41 (See 2 Pt 2:4). In the end, God will not only bring the wicked kings of this world into the judgment of condemnation, but also Satan and his angels (See 2 Th 1:8,9). In the context, it may be that Isaiah was referring to the gods that the people had created after their own image, which gods

they manufactured to conform to their own lusts. God brings judgment upon the wicked in time, as well as at the end of time. In Isaiah's context, God would bring judgment upon those whom He used to discipline His people. Because of their arrogance they would be brought down. This would be judgment in time. At the end of time, all wickedness of the world would be brought down.

Chapter 25 REASONS FOR JUDAH TO PRAISE GOD

25:1-5 In this first of three songs of victory, Isaiah first exalts God for keeping His covenant that He established with His people. There is rejoicing over the fall of the city of the captors who brought them into captivity. God is able to bring down all strongholds of the enemy. For this reason, the enemies of God must honor and fear Him. When God blasted the strongholds of the oppressors of Israel with His breath, He at the same time became the refuge to the poorest of the poor. Because He is a protecting canopy for His people, He brings to silence those who have dealt ruthlessly with His people with whom He has a covenant relationship.

25:6-8 This second song is of a celebrated banquet of victory. Mt. Zion is the spiritual refuge of God's people. Having a banquet with God at the end of great turmoil is hope that is given to His people (See Ps 36:8; 63:5; Mt 8:11; 26:29; Rv 19:7-9). It is a celebrated feast of victory over all those who have set themselves against God's eternal plan.

The banquet is possible because of God's work in the nations of the world. The banquet is a deliverance from the thirst and hunger that was brought on by the famine of living in a fallen world. It is a banquet celebrating deliverance from the fear of death (See comments 1 Co 15:54,55; Hb 2:14,15). It is a celebration of deliverance from the environment wherein the curse of sin brought persecution to the people of God.

25:9-12 The third song celebrates the fact that faith has brought its reward. Victory generates thanksgiving. The Lord delivered on His promises, and thus the delivered are overcome with a song of gratitude. The proud and haughty have been overcome, and the righteous rejoice. Moab, the nation that seduced the people of God into committing fornication, is gone (Gn 19:30-38; Nm 25:1).

Chapter 26 THE CAPTIVES ARE SET FREE

26:1-6 *A strong city:* This is not a reference to a city with physical walls. Reference is to the "salvation" of the Lord. It is the spiritual protection that God provides for the spiritual city of righteousness. *Open:* This is the great commission that people come into the salvation of God, God's city that is on earth for all men (Compare Mt 11:28-30). *Peace:* One has peace of mind only when he understands that it is God who protects him. Our trust, therefore, must be solely in God. *Focused:* One cannot have the peace that God offers if the focus of his life is split between the security of the possessions of this world and

trust in God. Our focus on God must generate emotional stability to the point that if we lose everything, we do not falter in our faith. **Strength:** When we are convinced that God is working in our lives, we become confident in the fact that He will care for us, both in life and in death. **The lofty city:** In contrast to the strong city of verse 1, arrogance and pride identify the lofty city. This is the city that God will bring down. The contrast between the two cities emphasizes the principle that pride must be conquered in the life of the righteous (See comments Mt 18:1-6; 23:12). **The poor:** See comments Js 2:1-7.

26:7-11 The way: God helps His people to overcome obstacles in life (Jr 31:9; Pv 3:6). **The desire of our soul:** God works for those who have desired to be His people. His name is thus glorified by their behavior (Jn 12:28). **Your judgments:** The righteous often do not receive justice. The righteous, therefore, wait for the final justice that God will render at the final judgment. Those of this world can know the just judgments of God only when those who are His behave themselves according to His will. **Grace:** Since God's judgments come with grace and mercy, then those of this world who are mistreated do not take revenge on those who persecute them. It is the desire of the righteous that God's grace be extended to the wicked in order that they might repent. **Majesty of the Lord:** Those who deal unjustly with their fellow man cannot understand the grace of God. **The fire:** See Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:6-9.

26:12-19 Other lords: Israel had experienced the turmoil that comes from being in the bondage of other nations. It was God's original plan that they dwell in peace in the land of promise. However, because of their apostasy to other gods, God delivered them over to those who brought no peace. Only by trusting in God is there true peace of mind. We can know that we are trusting in God only if we live according to His word. **You have visited and destroyed them:** Peace of mind came when God rescued His people out of the bondage of those to whom He had delivered them. When their captors were gone, Israel continued as the people of God. Israel's captors are forgotten, but God's people remain in peace. **Increased the nation:** The preservation and increase of the remnant of Israel was a manifestation that God was working to preserve the seedline of Abraham. He was doing this through Israel in order to accomplish His eternal purposes. **Whispered prayer:** While suffering the travail of bondage, they were helpless. It was only God who could deliver them. And He did deliver them when their cries came unto Him. **We gave birth:** Their efforts to deliver themselves were as a false pregnancy. It was only a delivery of wind. **Your dead will live:** Isaiah revealed here the final hope of all men on earth. There is a resurrection to come. It will be an event in which all who are in tombs will come forth (See comments Jn 5:28,29).

26:20,21 Israel's deliverance from the captivity of their captors is metaphorical of the deliverance of His people in

the end. His people will eventually be delivered from the wickedness and bondage of this world in order to be restored to peace within His presence. Nationally, Israel cried out for deliverance from bondage in order that they might enjoy the protection and peace they once had in the land of promise. When the deliverance came for His people in bondage, the Assyrians and Babylonians were gone. Deliverance of the people of God, therefore, meant the destruction of the wicked (2 Th 1:6-9).

Chapter 27 JUDGMENT AND PRESERVATION

27:1-6 This is the song of the sword of the Lord. The sword is tempered for strength. It is grim because of the destruction it can do. It is sweeping in that it cuts a wide swath. *Leviathan ... twisted serpent ... reptile:* Leviathan is probably a desert snake that darts from danger. The twisted serpent was the coiled serpent. The reptile was possibly the crocodile of the Nile. The metaphors picture Assyria, Babylon and Egypt who apocalyptically represent the power of evil on earth that is opposed to God's people. Egypt held Israel in captivity, and Assyria and Babylon took them into captivity. However, God has kept His holy people and protected them throughout the centuries. He has been the eternal gardener who has continually watered His vineyard. He has consumed the briars and thorns in order that Jacob take root and bud forth throughout the world. The fact that Israel was delivered from the

captivity of three nations is evidence that God was working in His people.

27:7-11 God disciplined His people because of their sin. However, God's punishment that He brought on His people was not as the punishment that He brought on the nations who held His people in captivity. God's punishment of His people for their apostasy was tempered with mercy. He disciplined with love. His punishment was to purge them of their sin, and in doing so, His people had to purge themselves of idolatry, as well as cut down the Asherah groves where they committed their spiritual adultery by bowing down to foreign gods. Those people of God, therefore, who did not bow down in repentance to the loving chastisement of God, reaped the same punishment that God rendered to the unbelieving nations. But if His people tried to build a fortified city against God's chastisement, then they would have no understanding of His work.

27:12,13 *One by one:* Those who would return from the captivity would be the devoted ones. *They will come:* From the dispersed children of the twelve tribes of Israel that were scattered throughout the former Assyrian Empire, and as far south as Egypt, the remnant would be brought back into the land of promise. God would thresh out the grain from the chaff, and bring the devoted again into the land. *Ready to perish:* If Israel had stayed in captivity, the nation would have lost her identity. The purpose for the restoration, therefore, was to preserve the identity of Israel until the Messiah came. Only by preserving the identity of Israel

until the coming of the Messiah could it be affirmed that God had fulfilled His promises to the fathers.

Trust In God, Not In Man

(28:1 – 35:10)

Outline: (1) Woe to Israel's leadership (28:1-6), (2) Woe to Judah's leadership (28:7-29), (3) Woe to deceivers (29:1-24), (4) Making a covenant with Egypt (30:1-17), (5) Judah delivered from Assyria (30:18-33), (6) Calamity for trusting in Egypt (31:1-9), (7) Righteousness and repentance (32:1-20), (8) Doom of Assyria (33:1-24), (9) God's vengeance (34:1-17), (10) The remnant and restoration (35:1-10)

Chapter 28

WOE TO ISRAEL'S LEADERSHIP

28:1-6 God brings down judgment on the leaders of His people. In this context, the leadership had drunken itself into unethical and immoral examples. This denunciation is delivered against the northern kingdom, with Ephraim, the principal tribal group, representing all ten tribes. **A mighty and strong one:** The Assyrians. God chose this nation to bring judgment upon the northern kingdom. The Assyrians would come to Samaria, to the leadership that had feasted itself into a drunken stupor.

WOE TO JUDAH'S LEADERSHIP

28:7-10 *They also:* Isaiah turns to the leadership of Judah. Though the leadership of the northern kingdom led the people into foreign alliances and moral degradation, they were not alone. The

leaders of Judah were also guilty of social degradation. They too had corrupted rulers and religious leaders. Isaiah was God's chosen prophet. However, there were other false preachers in their midst who were stupefied by strong drink. They too were religiously leading the people into making erroneous decisions and living unholy lives. Isaiah writes a deplorable picture of their banquet tables being full of filthy vomit. They were arrogant, and thus rejected the exhortations of Isaiah. Isaiah thus stood alone in the midst of religious leaders who preached for profit, and partied in lavish feasts during which they drank themselves senseless with strong drink. **Precept upon precept:** They chided Isaiah for preaching the precepts of the law of God. They declared themselves morally free from the restrictions of moral law that Isaiah proclaimed.

28:11-13 *Foreign language:* In the Hebrew text verse 11 is a series of monosyllables. Because of their apostasy, the time would come when they would be spoken to in monosyllables in captivity. They would be given commands from the Assyrians, and eventually from the Babylonians. Since they would not listen to the precepts of God, they would have to listen to the commands of their captors.

28:14-19 *Covenant:* Hezekiah's officials were the scornful men. Regardless of their counsel, Judah could not make alliances with Egypt that would guard them from the Assyrians. Alliances with foreign nations could not save. Making alliances with foreign nations was actually bargaining with death. They

were alliances of lies. **Cornerstone:** If they trusted in God, and maintained the laws of the covenant that He had made with them, they would have a sure foundation upon which to stand. They were already in an alliance with God, and thus they should trust in this alliance instead of the alliances they were making with foreign powers. **Measuring line ... plummet:** God's will is the standard by which they were to be determined faithful. As a builder uses a measuring line and plummet to determine whether a building is constructed properly, so God's word determines the moral standing of His people. **Covenant with death:** Regardless of Judah's courtship with Egypt, Assyria would ravage the countryside, depopulating the land of Palestine with death and captivity. Only Jerusalem would remain unconquered.

28:20-22 Bed: Verse 20 was a proverb quoted by Isaiah to remind Hezekiah and his officials that his bed that he made with Egypt will be too short in which to sleep, and the blanket too narrow into which to wrap himself. **His awesome work:** Their lack of trust in God had driven God to align with foreign nations in order to bring judgment upon His people. They had scoffed at God's alliance (covenant) with them, and thus increased their bondage to those nations with whom they made alliances. **Perazim:** See 2 Sm 5:20; 1 Ch 14:11. David destroyed the army of the Philistines, and thus destroyed any who would stand in his way to carry out God's purpose for the existence of Israel. Their attempt to guard themselves from the

threat of the Assyrians agitated God to increase their calamity.

28:23-29 This parable reveals God's purpose and measure of chastisement. There will be chastisement, but it will be measured in order not to annihilate His people. The work of the farmer in farming the land comes in stages. He does not plant while he is plowing. There is a designated time for each action of farming in order to bring about the desired crop. At this time in the history of Israel, it was a time for pruning (captivity). After the plowing there would eventually come the time to bring forth the repentant remnant. The remnant would be the seed in Israel from which the Messiah and Savior of the world would eventually come.

Chapter 29

WOE TO DECEIVERS

29:1-4 Ariel: There is a play on words in the Hebrew of this context. The word *ir-el* is Jerusalem, the "city of God." Though she is *Ari-El*, the "lion of God," Jerusalem will become *Ariel*, the "altar-hearth of God." Because of her apostasy from trusting in God, she would eventually be reduced because of God's consuming hearth of fire. God would camp against the city, bring it to ruins, and then its voice would be like the voice of a ghost speaking from the earth. Its ruins and dust would say that there was a great city here, but now it is deserted. **Whisper from the dust:** As one would whisper a sound in the last moments before death, so Jerusalem would whisper its existence to mankind before being de-

stroyed. No one would hear and come to her rescue.

29:5-8 In the context of the preceding pronouncement of judgment in verses 1-4 comes a note of encouragement concerning the enemies of Jerusalem. Though they are used as God's proxy to bring judgment on Jerusalem, they will be blown away as dust. In one night, God sent forth His Angel to kill 185,000 of the Assyrians who had camped against Jerusalem (37:35-38; 2 Kg 19:35-37).

29:9-12 Those who should have been preaching to the people that which was to come, the prophets and seers, were blinded. Both they and the people to whom they preached were blinded. What God would do to the Assyrians could not have been predicted. It could only have been prophesied by the inspiration of God's true prophet. Their prophets and seers were incapable of foreseeing the calamity to come, and thus they could not speak of that which was to come. They were false prophets. These prophets could not read the signs of the times, for they were spiritually illiterate.

29:13,14 These are profound words for every preacher who would presume to foretell the future. What God stated through Isaiah was contrary to what everyone expected (Compare 28:21; Dt 28:58,59). It was an awesome event that was beyond the ability of men to predict. Their false preachers and seers proclaimed to be able to foretell the future, but what would happen would identify them to be fake prophets who preached only for gain. Because their hearts were far from God, they preached the com-

mandments of men (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

29:15-24 *Hide their counsel:* The leaders presumed that they could hide their counsel from God. Their thoughts could not be hid from God. They had created a god in their thinking from which they could conceal themselves. They had forgotten that their Creator was omniscient and the eternal sovereign over all things. *Lebanon will be turned into a fruitful field:* Through the chastisement to come, Jerusalem, and Israel in general, would be pruned. And because of the pruning, the nation would once again be productive. They would be cleansed of the ruthless people among them, those who perverted justice and oppressed the poor. *Not now be ashamed:* In their purging, the remnant would come forth without shame. As a nation taken through the purging fires of trial, Isaiah speaks of a time when they would come forth a reverent people who will never again turn to gods they had created after their own imaginations. Once they have been purged, they would then appreciate their covenant with God. They would better understand that as a nation of people, God had greater things for them in the future.

Chapter 30

MAKING A COVENANT WITH EGYPT

30:1-5 Unfortunately, instead of trusting in God, Judah went to Egypt in order to form an alliance against the Assyrians. In doing this, they were rebellious against the protection of God and ignored His protecting hand. Because

they did not consult God in this matter, they added sin to sin. **Cover with a covering:** To make a treaty or alliance. **Shadow:** A cover of protection. They put Egypt before God.

30:6,7 Their tribute that they paid to Egypt for an alliance would not profit them against the Assyrians. **Rahab:** This is probably a reference to the sluggish hippopotamus. Egypt sits in her domain, but responds slowly to the needs of others. Any alliance with her would result in no help for Judah.

30:8-11 When Judah refused to be directed by God, they sought to devise their own means of deliverance. This was a time in Judah when they had long forsaken their trust in God to deliver them as in the days of the judges. They were thus rebellious in that they would not listen to the word coming from the mouth of Isaiah. They were antagonistic to whatever Isaiah preached.

30:12-14 Their trust in alliances with another nation would eventually break down when God intended to take them into captivity. No work among men can stand against the work of God through the nations. The wall of Judah's alliances would break and never be restored.

30:15-17 **By returning:** This was Isaiah's plea for a recall of the emissaries to Egypt. Only in returning to God, and trusting in Him for deliverance, would Judah be delivered from the Assyrians. They must remain silent, and then watch for the deliverance of God. Those who opposed Isaiah replied that they would trust in Egypt's swift horses in order to flee. But Isaiah replied that

their enemies would ride on swifter horses, and eventually overtake them. Only a small remnant would be spared in order to be a beacon for the existence of Israel.

JUDAH DELIVERED FROM ASSYRIA

30:18-22 God is just, and thus He is on His throne, awaiting the time when He will intervene for His people. **Your Teacher:** God will be heard by His students simply because they will have been pruned of their dull hearing. They will be instructed because they will listen. The result will be that they will throw away their idols that they created in order to have other gods before them.

30:23-26 In contrast to the famine that God brought on them in order that they repent, after their repentance He would restore the prosperity of the land. The moon would shine as the sun, and the sun would shine with perfect brightness.

30:27-33 The destruction of the Assyrians at the gate of Jerusalem would be the manifestation of the judgment of God that He renders to every nation that sets itself against the people of God. Because of their lack of fear of God, Judah's enemies manifested their arrogance by setting themselves against God's people. After the strong arm of the Lord had descended and shattered the enemies of Judah, the people would come in procession with the playing of the flute in order to praise God. **Tophet:** Literally, "the place of burning." The picture is probably of Israel's cremation of the 185,000

Assyrians whom God killed. They were burned in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) outside the walls of Jerusalem. This burning of those bodies defined what later would be the meaning of Gehenna that was used by Jesus throughout His ministry (See Mt 5:22,29,30).

Chapter 31 CALAMITY

FOR TRUSTING IN EGYPT

31:1-3 Judah sought to procure horses and chariots from Egypt in order to fight against the Assyrians. But trusting in the inventions of man in order to fight against the purpose of God would only prove futile. The leaders of Judah thought they were wise in seeking help from Egypt. But their wisdom would be turned to foolishness by the wisdom of God. What would transpire was that both the Egyptians and Judah would fall in order to manifest the strength of God.

31:4-9 The Lord is the lion who will not be disturbed by the Assyrians' cry against the city of Jerusalem. Regardless of the Assyrians' taunting of the Jews at the city wall, God would come upon them as a lion upon its prey. **Turn to Him:** God called on the leaders of Judah to turn from their political efforts of trusting in themselves and Egypt. As proof of their repentance, they were to cast away their idols. **Sword not of man:** This was a prophecy that the Assyrians would not die in a battle between armies. However, the remnants of the army would flee as from a battle. The fact that the people to whom Isaiah spoke these

words did not understand, meant that they would have to learn from the fulfillment of this prophecy, which fulfillment was calamity. **Furnace in Jerusalem:** The arrogance of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, led him to believe that he could take Jerusalem. Jerusalem thus became the occasion for God to bring judgment upon him. For Sennacherib, Jerusalem became a consuming fire that devoured his army. His failure to take the city became the evidence that Isaiah was the true prophet of God. He was not of the false prophets who were saying that Judah would not be ravaged.

Chapter 32 RIGHTEOUSNESS AND REPENTANCE

32:1-8 It seems that Isaiah wanted to remind the Jews of what it was like in the land before they allowed sin to change their culture. He is looking to the future by painting a picture of a restoration to the glory of their former years. In the social environment of the restored society to come, they would be able to distinguish between right and wrong. **King:** There is at least a picture here of the church to come, wherein the righteous would dwell under the kingship of Jesus. **As a refuge:** The character of the new citizens will be changed. They would no longer be oppressors, but the individuals of the new citizenship that would be a refuge, shield, and place of compassion and comfort for those seeking God. **Eyes ... see:** The new social order would be of those who truly discern the character of a righteous person. Because they have

obeyed the will of the Lord, they will be able to discern the character of others according to the will of the Lord. Contrary to the fool whose discernment is twisted, the true character of the obedient will be manifested by one exercising prudent judgment and spiritual relationships with others. They will determine noble plans, and then not waver from their stand for righteousness.

32:9-15 In view of the impending danger, it seems that the women of Jerusalem were caught up in the luxury of their material living. ***Vintage will fail:*** In about one year from this prophecy troubles would begin for Jerusalem. There would be no second year crop. Isaiah called on them to strip off their luxurious garments and put on clothes that manifested mourning. Not long in the future their palaces would be empty and the land left to briars and thorns. ***Until the Spirit is poured out:*** This statement corresponds with Joel 2:28-32. Peter quoted Joel 2 in Acts 2:16-21. We would conclude that Isaiah and Joel were speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order to initiate the beginning of the church in A.D. 30. The word “until” in verse 15, therefore, infers that the desolation would continue until this date. There would be a remnant that would return, but it would never be as it was when Israel first possessed the land. But in the fulfillment of what Isaiah says, the restoration is not a restoration of crops, but a spiritual restoration known as the church of the living God.

32:16-20 Since this would be the time of the reign of the Messiah, then

what is pictured is a metaphorical environment of peace. Righteousness would be cultivated. Peace produced. Though God would continue to bring judgments in time on those who would be the enemies of His people, at the same time He would provide security and protection for them.

Chapter 33 DOOM OF ASSYRIA

The historical background of this chapter is possibly when tribute was sent from Jerusalem to Sennacherib in Lachish in order to stop his attack of Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 18). Sennacherib took the tribute, but demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. He is thus identified as the treacherous one.

33:1-6 Sennacherib dealt treacherously with the leaders of Jerusalem. Though he had not yet had the opportunity to plunder Jerusalem, his time was coming to suffer the judgment of God. ***Lord be gracious:*** This is Isaiah’s prayer that God be stirred, for when God is stirred, the nations flee. Since the treasure of Zion is righteousness, God will spare her.

33:7-13 ***Ambassadors of peace:*** Hezekiah’s ambassadors that he sent to Sennacherib were treacherously betrayed by the Assyrian king. He did not honor his commitment to the agreement that was made. He took their tribute, and then demanded the surrender of the city. Sennacherib trampled down every city and refused to honor any commitments of peace. Hezekiah had submitted to the demands of Sennacherib by paying the

tribute. Nevertheless, the Assyrian king wanted the total submission of the land of Palestine and all its treasures. **Now I will rise:** After Hezekiah and his officials had exhausted all their abilities to negotiate peace, it was time for God to take action. The fire of the Lord was kindled, and now was burning hot against the Assyrians for their demands that they had made on the city. The Assyrians had ravaged the land, destroying one city after another. But now it was time for them to reap what they had sown.

33:14-16 It was a time when the unrighteous in Jerusalem would be spared because they were in the company of the righteous. Those who were truly righteous dealt justly with others. They spoke honestly, despised extortion, refused bribes, would not listen to violence, or take pleasure in looking on evil. Because the righteous had committed themselves to the fear of the Lord, their defense was the Lord. Their sustenance was guaranteed because they lived under the protection of the Lord.

33:17-24 Isaiah encouraged the people with a bright outcome of the gloomy circumstances that had been transpiring since the Assyrians entered Palestine. Hezekiah was in sackcloth, mourning both his predicament and the destruction of the cities of Judah. **Meditate on terror:** As the Assyrians hurled insults at the people, those who had counted out tribute to the Assyrians had failed. Those who depended on their defense by counting the towers of the wall, would also fail, for no tower of defense is needed when God goes to work

for His people. **You will not see a fierce people:** God took care of the Assyrians. The people were delivered from having to listen to commands from those who spoke a foreign language. God swept through the Assyrian army, killing 185,000 in one night. Peace was brought to the people in Jerusalem when the Assyrians slept the peace of death. **A tabernacle that will not be taken down:** Jerusalem was not destroyed. **Wherein will go no boat:** No enemy of Judah will be allowed to launch against God's tabernacle, for the Lord is its ruler and king. **Your tackle hangs slack:** Though old and ragged, there will be better days for Zion. Instead of being plundered, the lame Zion would eventually plunder from those who sought to plunder the city.

Chapter 34

GOD'S VENGEANCE

Seated in the immediate aftermath of God's judgment on the Assyrians with the death of 185,000 soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem, the general historical setting of the judgment prophecies of chapters 34 & 35 is God's condemnation of the nations that have raised their hands against Him and His purpose with His people. As the delivered Israelites looked on the dead bodies of the Assyrians, it was a time for Isaiah to take the minds of the people to the final judgment that was yet in the future. The immediate events established the earthly and literal definition of the metaphor that was used for the final condemnation. Now the people needed to look into the future to the final destination of the unrighteous. From the

prophecies of the preceding chapters, God here brings judgment on the wicked in order to redeem the righteous. Chapter 34 takes the judgment scene beyond the immediate historical context to the final judgment of all the wicked. The comfort that is revealed in chapter 35 is the final redemption of the righteous from a wicked world.

34:1-4 Nations: The message is to all people on the earth. All are called before the judgment court of God. **Slain ... stench:** One can only imagine the horrific sight the delivered Israelites saw the morning after the Angel passed over the Assyrian army. There were 185,000 dead bodies in the area around Jerusalem. When the Jews emerged from the city, they had to burn the bodies. However, they began to stink before they could burn them. It was certainly a horrible experience, but one that established the definition of the metaphor that would define the eternal condemnation that is to come on the wicked (See 2 Th 1:6-9). The burning of the bodies was completed, but the result of their destruction was forever. **Hosts of heaven:** See 2 Pt 3:10-12.

34:5-7 Bathed in heaven: God's judgment sword is tempered into steel when placed in water after being heated. **Idumea:** Or, Edom. The sword of the Lord is now turned with vengeance against Edom. The Edomites had persecuted Israel when they came from Egyptian captivity. It was now time for their judgment. **Bozrah:** The primary stronghold of Edom in its north, bordering southern Palestine. **Wild oxen ... young**

bulls ... bulls: All the government officials of Edom will come down to judgment.

34:8-15 Vengeance ... recompenses: Vengeance belongs to the Lord. And this was a time for vengeance against all those who would set themselves in wickedness against the people of God. All those nations throughout history that fought against Israel throughout her years of decline and captivity would be brought down to judgment. **Not be quenched:** Though taken from the most horrible thing man could experience on earth, the metaphorical meaning would intensify in reference to eternal judgment. It would intensify, not in reference to burning heat, but in the fact that one would be destroyed from the presence of God (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9). **Forever:** The destruction would be complete, with consequences that would not be changed. The meaning is not that the process of destroying would continue without end, but that which is destroyed will not be brought back into existence. Once the persecuting nations of Israel were destroyed, they would not be brought back into existence. The central theme of the prophecy is that the enemies of Israel were annihilated from history, whereas the nation of Israel was restored to existence.

34:16,17 As every creature has his or her mate, so the mate of prophecy is fulfillment. What Isaiah has written in the scroll will be fulfilled. Thus one purpose for the writing of prophecy was that we the readers might have evidence of the fact that the prophecy was accurately made and accurately fulfilled. One of

the greatest documents that proves the inspiration of the Bible is the book of Isaiah. Except for the final resurrection and judgment, every prophecy that was made in the book has already come to pass. Because all the prophecies of events in time have been fulfilled, we know that God will fulfill the prophecies of the final resurrection and judgment that are yet to come.

Chapter 35 THE REMNANT AND RESTORATION

35:1-10 This is a beautiful picture of God's redemption. Because of their apostasy, God had ravaged the land of Palestine with drought and famine, and also with the armies of Assyria and Babylon. It was now time for redemption and restoration. New life would come into the land. God's people would be coming home. They would be coming home to the sweet smelling blossoms of lilies, irises and tulips that would transform their waste land into a paradise. They would again smell the fragrance of the cedars of Lebanon. Isaiah's picture of the restored land would strengthen the captives. The weak would be encouraged. The downhearted would be lifted up. The spiritually blind would see. Intimidated captives would sigh for joy. The lame would leap in rejoicing. The land that was once given over to wild animals would again be pasture for their flocks and cattle. **Highway of Holiness:** The roadway that led the captives back to the land of promise was cleared of wickedness, and those things that would

lead one astray. It is a highway only for those who have committed themselves to the restoration of God's people (See comments Ez & Ne). It is a roadway for the redeemed of God, those who have been sanctified. Though this prophecy was fulfilled when a remnant of the twelve tribes was restored to Canaan after the years of captivity, God's people, the redeemed and sanctified, are on a highway to heaven. They too are headed for a place of rest (See comments Hb 4).

Hezekiah's Reign (36:1 – 39:8)

Outline: (1) Salvation of Jerusalem (36:1 – 37:38), (2) Illness and recovery of Hezekiah (38:1-22), (3) An ambassador from Babylon (39:1-8)

Chapter 36 SALVATION OF JERUSALEM

Historically, chapters 38 & 39 precede chapters 36 & 37 (See 2 Kg 18:13 – 20:18; 2 Ch 32). The setting for the following events is Sennacherib's effort to take Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

36:1-3 In this context it is stated that Sennacherib was launching an attack against Jerusalem for three reasons: (1) Hezekiah refused to pay tribute. (2) Hezekiah sought to make an alliance with Egypt and Babylon. (3) Hezekiah had supported the uprising of the Philistines against an Assyrian-appointed king. **Rabshakeh:** The name means "chief of the officers."

36:4-10 At the time, Sennacherib was laying siege to Lachish. He sent Rabshakeh to taunt the Jews who were

held up in Jerusalem. Rabshakeh thus spoke in order to undermine the confidence of the Jews in reference to their trust in the Egyptians. He also sought to undermine their confidence by mocking the gods of the nations who had already been defeated by the Assyrians. Hezekiah had restored Judah by banishing idolatrous worship from the people. Rabshakeh thus reasoned that even the gods of the Jews could not deliver them, for Hezekiah had banished them from the land. Rabshakeh forgot that those gods were not the gods of Israel. There was only one God in Israel, and he would witness the power of this God with the death of his army.

36:11,12 The language of commerce at the time was Aramaic. Since Rabshakeh wanted to discourage the Jews, he communicated in the Jews' Hebrew language, the language that was spoken by all the Israelites.

36:13-20 Rabshakeh was seeking to generate a mutiny among Hezekiah's soldiers. His plea was that they would enjoy food and drink, and then go into a land that was as their homeland. Since Assyria had taken all the cities of Judah, he reasoned that even Jerusalem would fall.

36:21,22 The people remained loyal to Hezekiah, who was supported by Isaiah. Though the threats of Rabshakeh shook Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, they remained faithful to the words of Hezekiah and Isaiah.

Chapter 37

37:1-4 When Hezekiah heard the

report of what Rabshakeh had said, he was humbled. He went to the only place where he could receive a divine answer for the dilemma of Judah. Judah had come to the point that only the king's faith in God would deliver them from the attack of Assyria. He had failed in all his plans to make alliances with Egypt and Babylon, and thus as a last resort, he went to God. Though they had failed to put God first in their initial defense against the Assyrians, God was delivering Jerusalem for a greater purpose. It was not in His plan at this time in history to take Judah into captivity.

37:5-7 The answer was quick and specific. Sennacherib would suffer the blast of the Lord, and a rumor. He would return home and be killed himself.

37:8-13 When Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib, Sennacherib had moved the Assyrian army from Lachish to Libnah. There was an immediate threat by the king of Ethiopia, and thus he moved to face this threat. He then sent Rabshakeh back to Jerusalem in order to intimidate Hezekiah into surrendering. Rabshakeh's ultimatum was directed to Hezekiah, reminding him that Assyria had already conquered many major cities. Hezekiah must not assume that he can withstand the Assyrian army.

37:14-20 Now that all else had failed, Hezekiah turned to God in humble prayer. When human wisdom and efforts are exhausted, only God can deliver. God allowed Hezekiah to come to this predicament in order that he be moved to the point of being on his knees before God. When considering all the facts,

Hezekiah knew that Jerusalem could be delivered only if it were an act of God. If Jerusalem were delivered, then the nations who had been defeated by the Assyrians, would know that the God of Israel was the only true and living God. All the idol gods of the nations were only the invention of their imaginations. ***Cherubim:*** See Ex 25:21,22.

37:21-29 God took action because of Hezekiah's prayer. A nation was thus saved by the prayer of its leader. Verses 22-29 are a song of taunt against the arrogant Sennacherib. The song is a judgment against his arrogant presumption that he would raise a hand against the Creator of all things, and His daughter, Jerusalem. God reminded Sennacherib that he could not have done any of the things over which he boasted if God had not been working for him. Because he had acted so arrogantly, God would send him back to the place from which he came.

37:30-35 In a matter of one year the Assyrians would be gone from Judah. Farmers would be back in their fields and cultivating their land. After they had reaped the volunteer harvests, they would plant their own fields and harvest their crops. ***David's sake:*** It was not God's original plan when He brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity to select a permanent place for the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle was to be circulated throughout the territories of the tribes. But after five hundred years of existence in the land, and in the declining years of Israel in the land, God allowed David to select a place for the building of a temple.

God gave David the concession to have the temple built, and thus the temple was built by Solomon because of David's desire. In this context, it is saved from destruction by God for the sake of David. However, when the Babylonians came in 586 B.C., the temple was destroyed.

37:36-38 The death of the enemies of Judah was also Judah's deliverance. ***Angel of the Lord:*** The Hebrew phrase that is used here would make this a reference to the preincarnate Christ. Verse 38 was possibly later added to the text by a disciple of Isaiah, for Sennacherib lived another sixteen years after he had departed and returned to Nineveh. Isaiah's prophecy of his death was fulfilled, but not immediately upon his return to Nineveh.

Chapter 38

ILLNESS AND RECOVERY OF HEZEKIAH

38:1-3 See 2 Kg 20:1-21; 2 Ch 32:24-33. This event preceded the attack of Sennacherib against Jerusalem, and is placed here, with chapter 39, to introduce the content of chapters 40-66. Hezekiah was probably 38 years old when Isaiah told him to put his house in order. At this time he had no children, and thus the Davidic seedline was in danger. Hezekiah had accomplished many reforms in Judah, but his works of restoration were no guarantee against death. He was not being punished because he was a wicked king, nor was he to be saved from death because of righteous deeds. In his prayer, Hezekiah humbled himself before God, for he believed the pro-

nouncement of Isaiah concerning his death.

38:4-8 *I have heard your prayer:* God will answer prayers in those areas where we have a record of Him working. In this case, God worked in the body of Hezekiah in order to restore it to health. No visible miracle was performed, but God worked against nature in order to restore the cells of his body in order that he not die (See comments Js 5:13-18). ***I will defend this city:*** God would defend the city against the attack of Sennacherib. ***Sign to you:*** The process of healing would take time as God assisted the natural body processes to bring health to Hezekiah. Until he was healed, God knew that Hezekiah needed reassurance that he would not die. ***Shadow on the stairway:*** See 2 Kg 20:9-11. More recent translations do not use the word “degrees” in reference to the movement of the sun, since measurements in time were not calculated in degrees in ancient Israel.

38:9-20 These words are Hezekiah’s song of pleading for life, and an expression of gratitude for God’s deliverance. He was in anguish, feeling that his life was cut off before he could accomplish his destiny in life. He believed that if God were to be the foundation of his life and mission, then God would give him a longer life. God responded to his plea, and thus Hezekiah concluded that his ordeal in being delivered by God from the natural laws of sickness was God’s sign to him that he was a redeemed person in the eyes of God. Since God spared him, he assumed that God had greater

things for him to do. And in view of the historical context, God knew that His people needed Hezekiah’s leadership in a time of national crisis that was brought on by the Assyrian threat.

38:21,22 *Lump of figs:* We are not told if this was simply a sign for accepting the healing of God, or that it was believed that the lump of figs had some medicinal power. ***Boil:*** We are also not told exactly what the sickness was. We do see in these verses that all that could be done medically, was done. The true healing, however, was accomplished by God.

Chapter 39 AN AMBASSADOR FROM BABYLON

39:1,2 Hezekiah was not without flaws. When the king of Babylon sent a gift to him, he allowed his pride in the riches of Judah to cloud his judgment. He thus revealed to the messengers of Merodachbaladan the national treasures of Judah. His pride in the riches of Judah would eventually be the bait that would draw the Babylonians to Judah’s gate about one hundred years from the time of Hezekiah’s death. At that time Jerusalem would fall to Babylon in 586 B.C. ***Sick ... recovered:*** Merodachbaladan wanted to know of the recovery of Hezekiah and the great wonder that had occurred concerning the turning back of the shadow of the sun (See 2 Ch 32:31). However, his ulterior motives were possibly in reference to spying out the land. We might assume that the emissaries asked to see the wealth of Judah. Be-

cause Hezekiah was seeking their favor in order to have Babylon's protection against the Assyrians, he submitted to their request. Hezekiah possibly wanted the Babylonians to know that Judah had a great deal to offer in exchange for an alliance with Babylon.

39:3-8 Isaiah assumed correctly, that Hezekiah was working an alliance deal with Babylon in order to play politics for the deliverance of Jerusalem. He had done this with Egypt, and now he was doing it with Babylon. But because he did not trust totally in the Lord, Judah would pay the price for his lack of discretion. Eventually, the treasures of Jerusalem would be taken to Babylon. ***Good is the word of the Lord:*** This could have been a resolve by Hezekiah to relinquish to the judgment that God had pronounced. Or, it could have been that Hezekiah was relieved that he would not in his lifetime experience the calamity that would eventually come on Judah for their apostasy. We must keep in mind that Judah and Jerusalem would eventually fall to Babylon. They would not fall because Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian emissaries the treasures of Jerusalem, but because of their own apostasy from God. Isaiah simply revealed here that one of the reasons the Babylonians would come would be to relieve Jerusalem of all her treasures. But the real reason they would be coming was that God would be using Babylon to bring judgment upon Jerusalem for her apostasy.

Consolation For The Exiles (40:1 – 48:22)

Outline: (1) God comforts (40:1-31), (2) The power of prophecy (41:1-29), (3) Redemption of God's people (42:1 – 43:28), (4) Futility of idolatry (44:1-23), (5) Prophecy of Cyrus (44:24 – 45:25), (6) Overthrow of Babylon (46:1 – 47:15), (7) Rebuke of the unfaithful (48:1-22)

Chapter 40 GOD COMFORTS

The historical background of the chapters that follow is Judah's relief from the threat of destruction by the Assyrians. Beginning with this chapter, God reveals through Isaiah some of the most profound teaching of the Old Testament concerning His plan for the redemption of man. These chapters can be grouped in three divisions that reveal the following general themes: (1) The sovereignty of God over all creation, (2) the redemptive work of God for His people, and (3) the glory of the last days for the redeemed. While living in Palestine, Isaiah is taken by the Spirit through inspiration to the time when the Israelites would be living in captivity. But while in captivity, the people are given encouragement to believe in the great things that God had yet to accomplish through Israel.

40:1,2 An introduction is made here to all the proclamations that follow and continue to the end of the book. This is the voice of God who proclaims grace to the people. Israel's captivity is ended because the people have been purged of sin. It is now a time for comfort that will bring joy. It was a time for God's people to rejoice over their future. ***My people:*** See Ex 19:5,6; Lv 20:6; Dt 7:6; 14:2. They

were once rejected as God's people, but now they are again claimed because of His covenant relationship with them (Hs 1:9).

40:3-5 The call came from the desert while they were in captivity in Assyria and Babylonia, the places to which they had been taken captive. The way was to be made easy for them to return. The revealing of the glory of the Lord meant the salvation of His people.

40:6-8 Isaiah heard a voice that commanded him to preach a message of comfort. What he was to proclaim was the frailty of man, and thus man's necessary dependence on God. And because man is so frail, he has no right to claim deliverance by his own powers. God is eternal. His word is eternal. The eternal existence of frail man depends entirely on man's being in the presence of God (Compare comments 2 Th 1:6-9). ***The Lord blows:*** When God breathes on anything of His creation, it will wither or vanish away in an instant.

40:9-11 In the restoration, God will once again rule among His people from heaven. They will no longer seek a king to rule over them on earth. The good news would go from Jerusalem, and thus Jerusalem is personified to be the proclaimer of joy (See Is 2:1-3). The nature of the news was that it was good in reference to all men. Therefore, the news must be proclaimed. Isaiah's mission was not just to the cities of Judah, but to the whole world. The message was that God was coming. He was coming to accomplish His purpose on earth. The fulfillment of God's purpose for the ex-

istence of the world would not be deterred by anything that man could do. He would come to manifest His kingdom reign, regardless of the desires of men (See Jn 1:11). He would thus come with strength and gentleness. His strength would be toward those who rejected His work. His gentleness would be revealed to those who submitted to His word. He would protect and nurture the obedient, for they would be His sheep.

40:12-17 God can do what He desires and fulfill His promises because He is God. He is the creator of all things, and thus all things are under His control. No man, by use of man's standards of measuring, can compare with God who has determined the exactness of all that He created. These words chide those who would create false gods after the measurement of the abilities of men, and then exalt their creations to the place of God. The wisdom of God is incomprehensible, and thus cannot be compared with the greatest wisdom of man. Who, therefore, could give instruction to the Holy Spirit? One is doing just this when he seeks to create God after his own imagination. ***Drop ... dust:*** The most powerful nations of the world are only a single drop from a rain cloud. They are only a small particle of dust on a balance, and thus in no way affect the measurement of humanity. All the cedars of Lebanon could not build a fire large enough to offer all the animals of the country for a sufficient burnt offering to the Lord. Forgiveness does not come from offerings, but from grace.

40:18-20 It would be only awesome

ignorance on the part of a person to consider himself something in comparison to the awesome God of the universe. The incomprehensible foolishness of idolatry is that man seeks to compare himself with the incomprehensible God. The rich may use precious metals to form idols. The poor may use hard wood. Both can never use the imagination of men to form a representation of God, who is spirit (Jn 4:24; see At 17:29).

40:21-24 The created world is a better witness to the existence and power of God than all the institutions of man's wisdom (Ps 8; Rm 1:20). **Circle:** Long before scientists could prove that the earth was circular, the prophet here mentions the spherical nature of the earth in a passing statement with reference to God's enthronement over all that He created. There are no other earths that embellish the grandeur of God, for this revelation is not of life on other planets. On this earth rulers come and go, but God continues to exist over all things (Jb 12:21; Ps 107:40). Those rulers who would presume that they are so important, are simply blown away by the breath of God.

40:25,26 God is omniscient concerning His creation. The ignorance of man is manifested in his efforts to create gods that might in some way illustrate the incomprehensible God of all things.

40:27-31 God is omnipresent, and thus no man can hide from His presence. The comfort for God's people is in the fact that though God may seem distant, He is actually close, for in Him we live, move and have our being (At 17:28). The

bounds of God's comfort for His people are unlimited. He will not fail in giving strength to those who are downtrodden. Though men may grow weak, God's sustenance always abounds. Those who would wait for God to work in their lives will not be disappointed. They will be able to accomplish things beyond their dreams for God is able to work in the lives of those who walk by faith (Ep 3:20,21).

Chapter 41

THE POWER OF PROPHECY

41:1-4 The content of this chapter continues the challenge of God to man. The challenge is to the unbelieving nations (islands, or coastlands) for a comparison between their idolatrous gods and God's majesty. **The righteous man:** God raised up Abraham, and from his seed created a nation. God chose Abraham in order to fulfill a promise that in him all nations would be blessed (Gn 12:1-4). Israel was the nation through whom He would accomplish this eternal scheme.

41:5-7 The nations witnessed the work of God through Israel. Israel could not have been born out of the captivity of Egypt without the direct work of God. Though other nations formed their gods, only Israel existed throughout history while other nations vanished from history. The gods of other nations tottered and fell, but the God of Israel continued to work through His people.

41:8-13 Because of what God had done in the past in the history of Israel, Israel was to be encouraged. They were to be encouraged because God would continue to work through them until He

had completed the destiny of Israel. **Abraham My friend:** See Js 2:23. **Ends of the earth:** Abraham was called in Ur of the Chaldees in order to come to the land that God would later give to his descendants. **I have chosen you:** God chose Abraham. Pagan nations chose their gods and formed them in stone, wood or gold according to their own imaginations. Abraham was chosen because of his faith. His choosing was conditioned on his faith, and thus he was made the father of our faith. Once chosen, God promised that He would be with Abraham and strengthen him. God's promise to sustain Abraham was continued through his posterity, for he sustained Israel until the coming of the Messiah. Those who would make war in order to bring God's covenanted people to destruction would not be successful, for God would fight for His people.

41:14-20 Sharp threshing instrument: Instead of being cut down by the nations, God's people are strong and invincible. They are the ones who will thresh the nations as a large stone grinds the grain. The truth that would eventually come from Israel would be the standard by which the nations would be judged. If other nations were not righteous, they would be judged. **I will open rivers:** The land will go from a wasteland wherein they suffered drought and famine, to a fertile land of rejoicing. Palestine would again become the land of milk and honey for the people of God. When they considered the transformation in lives and land, they would understand that it was the work of God who accom-

plished this awesome deed. Because Isaiah was writing during a time of national tragedy, it would have been difficult for the people to understand that these things would come to pass. Those who were shortsighted would possibly have concluded that after the siege of Sennacherib, all these things would be fulfilled. However, Isaiah was looking far beyond the Assyrian Empire. These events would happen over 150 years later. Their fulfillment would be encouragement for the returnees from captivity that God had truly been working through Isaiah for the benefit of His people.

41:21-24 God challenged the nations by challenging their gods. In challenging the false gods, He was challenging their imaginations, for their gods were only the figment of their imaginations. He first challenged them to think of some prophecy in the past that had been fulfilled. God had presented His case by giving the example of Abraham, that He had promised that from Abraham a great nation would come (Gn 12:1-3). **Present your case:** It was time for the false prophets of the false gods to prove themselves. **Strong reasons:** The proof of fulfilled prophecy must be beyond doubt. No obscure predictions and fulfillments will be accepted. Many seek to make predictions of the future, but prediction is based on known occurring events in the present. There are no hints in the making of a true prophecy. There were no hints that Judah would be delivered from the threat of Sennacherib. There was no indication that Jerusalem would fall over one hundred years later. There

were no thoughts in the minds of the people that there would be a restoration of Israel to Palestine. In fact, all present events at the time of Isaiah were contrary to what Isaiah prophesied. Too many preachers seek to gain a following by their vain predictions and prognostications. ***He who chooses you is an abomination:*** Isaiah not only called the false prophets worthless, he also pronounced condemnation of those who believed their senseless predictions. It was because of the belief of the followers that the false prophets were able to continue. Those who reject the word of God in order to follow after those who are false prophets are an abomination to the Lord.

41:25-29 God ended with a final challenge. ***From the north:*** God had called Abraham and made of him a great nation. But those who would presume to prophecy the future are false simply because they presumptuously use the name of God in order to draw glory to themselves through their supposed prophecy. But such people are all worthless. Those who would follow such people are victims of their own ignorance concerning true prophecy. ***A messenger of good news:*** Isaiah was the present messenger of good news to Jerusalem. Jerusalem would eventually be restored. In a time of national calamity, this was a message of hope. God gives the message of hope in the following chapter.

Chapter 42 REDEMPTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Chapter 40 spoke of God as the true

God of all creation. Chapter 41 was a contrast between God and the gods that men create after their own image. This chapter speaks of God's suffering servant, the Messiah.

42:1-4 These verses speak of the character, or nature of the Servant. Though Israel may be the historical foundation upon which the statements of this chapter are made, what is revealed is One who is far beyond what is attainable by man. We would conclude, therefore, that Isaiah is looking far into the future, to a time when God would be revealed on earth through His incarnation. The character of the Suffering Servant will be one who is tender and compassionate. He will draw all men to Himself. He will bring justice to the downtrodden. The Gentiles will seek His redemption.

42:5-9 God exalts the Servant to the One through whom God would establish a covenant with the people. He would be a light to the Gentiles, and in being a light to those in bondage, He would give freedom (Jn 8:32-36). He would thus have a redemptive mission to all nations. ***The former things:*** All that God had prophesied through the prophets concerning things that would come to pass in Isaiah's day had already come to pass. Therefore, what God was prophesying at this time through Isaiah concerning the future, would certainly come to pass.

42:10-13 A new song is needed for God because He is doing new things. Since we would view this context as Messianic, then certainly a new song is needed for the praise of God's salvational work among men through the Messiah.

Kedar: Even the marauding Arabs of Kedar should sing in jubilation, shouting the praises of God from the highest mountains. **The rock:** Reference to Petra, the capital of the Edomites. The picture is that Isaiah, as he gives this prophecy, is located in Palestine, not in the flatlands of Babylon.

42:14-17 God will be as a warrior whose rage is stirred up. He will go forth from His restraint and bring judgment on the wicked and justice for the righteous. Those who were spiritually blind will see His grace. Those who trusted in idols will be shamed. After Israel returned from captivity, they never again looked to any idols. Idolatry was purged from the nation.

42:18-20 At the time of Isaiah's ministry, Israel was blinded to God because of their own desire to turn away from His word (See Rm 11:25). Israel was the blinded servant. She was blinded above all because of the great things that God had done for her throughout her history. She had all the opportunity to witness the direct work of God in the life of the nation, but she turned away to be her own master.

42:21-25 Three centuries before the end of Israel, God was disciplining both the northern and southern kingdoms for their apostasy to walk according to their own moral laws. They remained blinded to His discipline, for they did not realize that the calamity they were experiencing was brought on them by God. They were aloof to the fact that God was seeking to turn them back. They went so far into apostasy from God that they would not

listen to the prophets of God who were sent to call for their repentance. However, they needed to recognize that all their calamities were sent from God. They were not simply the victims of kingdom builders as the Assyrians and Babylonians. These nations were sent by God to stir them to repentance. They failed to see the chastening hand of God working through these nations. In order to understand their move away from God, we must keep in mind that they turned away from the word of God (See comments Hs 4:6). They became a godless nation that had forgotten their origins, and the God who had given them birth and preserved them throughout their history.

Chapter 43

43:1-7 All Israel will be called back by God to the land of Palestine. Reference is specifically to the restoration of the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel who would be allowed to return to their land after the Babylonian captivity (See comments Ez & Ne). God specifically called them out of captivity by their name. They were His people, and thus the prophecy was specific. The prophecy specifically referred to Israel, and thus we would not assume that the historical fulfillment of the call was to all nations. **Water ... river ... fire:** No natural dangers would hinder them from returning from captivity. **Egypt ... Ethiopia ... Seba:** God gave these nations as a ransom for the salvation of Jerusalem. Sennacherib focused his military energies on these nations, while sending a part of

his army to Jerusalem. ***I will give men:*** Since God was working through Israel in order to bring the Messiah, and Savior, into the world, He would have given the rest of the world in order to save Jerusalem. He would have done this, because without Israel, the promises would not have been fulfilled through Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). By preserving Israel for the purpose of saving the world, God must be glorified. Israel must understand that she was saved, not because of her own worth, but because of God's eternal plan through the nation.

43:8-13 This profound challenge calls on man to bring forth their prophecies in order that they be compared with God's fulfilled prophecy concerning Israel. The existence of Israel throughout the centuries was evidence that God was working through the nation. Israel could not have been born as a nation without the help of God. The nation could not have been sustained throughout history unless God was preserving the people for a greater purpose. They could never have come back from captivity unless God had released them. The birth, preservation and continuation of the nation of Israel is one of the greatest evidences for the existence of God and His work among men.

43:14,15 God brought down the Babylonian Empire in order that the Medo-Persian Empire, through King Cyrus, allow Israel to be restored to the land of promise.

43:16-21 ***Sea ... chariot ... army:*** The same God who parted the Red Sea, and then closed it upon the army of Pha-

raoh when Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity, will again work to bring Israel out of Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. As God snuffed out the power of Pharaoh, so he will snuff out the power of these two empires who had taken His people into captivity. ***A new thing:*** God dried up the waters in order that they be delivered from Egypt. Now He will supply water in order that they be able to cross the desert from the captivity of Babylon to the freedom of their promised land. God created a highway out of Egypt. He will create another highway out of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. ***Formed for Myself:*** Israel was not created for the purpose of simply establishing another nation on earth. The nation was for His purpose of bringing the incarnation of Himself into the world through Jesus.

43:22-24 This is a picture of grace. Though Israel did not seek God, He continued His work through them as a nation. They had not earned their deliverance, but He gave it to them in order to fulfill His promises to the fathers. They were totally undeserving of the grace that was given in order that they continue as a nation.

43:25-28 The Israelites went into apostasy because they sought to satisfy their own worldly ambitions. They had forgotten that they were born as a nation through the grace of God. They were sustained by His grace. In order that they continue throughout history for the coming of the Messiah, their restoration to the land after the captivities was a sign that God had forgiven them.

Chapter 44

FUTILITY OF IDOLATRY

This is a profound text in reference to beliefs in spooks and spirits that are the product of man's imaginations. Those who would mold their fears into fetishes and charms around supposed evil forces of the spirit world should take a good look at how God mocks such creations of the minds and hands of men. When the truth of God's word is preached to a culture, it requires a long period of time through aggressive teaching of the word of God to eradicate spiritualistic beliefs from a culture. God sent Israel into three generations of captivity in order to accomplish this emotional and psychological transformation. He did not bring them back from captivity until the mysticism was gone from their thinking. The first captives returned in 536 B.C., and the last group almost a hundred years later under the direction of Nehemiah. But when they returned, faith in witches and mediums no longer existed in Israel. Those who foster such beliefs today only keep people in the bondage of their own minds. God mocks such beliefs in this text. All Christians would do well to take heed lest they be led astray into the captivity of their own imagination.

44:1-5 *Jeshuran*: This term is used as a diminutive word of endearment. It means "upright one." God had given His people over for judgment in order to move them to repentance. He now comforts them by reminding them that He will bring them back because of their repentance. They must not fear, for he will preserve them for a spiritual posterity that

is coming in the future. ***Pour My Spirit:*** This would be the true Spirit, not a fictitious spirit or spook that the idolaters had created because of their own ignorance of the word of God. Since this would be a reference to the same outpouring that is mentioned in Joel 2:28, then we would assume that Isaiah is also speaking of the time when this prophecy would be fulfilled. Peter quoted Joel 2:28 in order to remind those on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled when the Spirit was poured out on the apostles (At 2:16,17). It would be and was a time when God's people would not be ashamed to be His people (Rm 1:16). As a result of the outpouring, new converts would spring up among God's people. There would be conversions from all the nations (See Mk 16:15,16; At 2:41).

45:6-8 The gods who are the imaginations of men can never be compared to the God of Israel who declares the future. God had given birth to Israel, and preserved her to the time of Isaiah. From that time forward, God had prophesied a glorious future, and thus Israel must not fear the imaginations of those who speak contrary to God's message.

44:9-17 In this section of Scripture, God proclaimed the utter foolishness of man in his efforts to make idols that represent fictitious gods. God created man a spiritual being. When this spiritual being forsakes the word of God, he will imagine spirits and spooks by which he will control his own life by living according to his own self-imposed fears. He will create in his mind spirit beings that

do not exist. He will do this to the exclusion of God. His belief in his own spirits will be so great that he will argue with others that they are real, and can affect man with calamity. Those who would believe that the spirit inventions of men have affect over the physical world in which man lives should read carefully these verses. God chides those who have foolishly allowed themselves to believe in that which does not exist.

44:18-20 Wooden idols are good only for cooking food and keeping one warm. **He has shut their eyes:** God will allow one to believe a lie, but condemn him for his desire to believe the lie (2 Th 2:11,12). Because the deceived had no desire to believe the truth, they will be condemned for their desire to follow after their own deceptions.

44:21-23 God's people must remember that they are the product of God, not the product of their own invention. Idolatry is humanism in that man seeks to be the center of his own power. He seeks to focus on no other existence outside himself. The evolutionist, therefore, is a humanist in that he seeks to make himself the center of his own existence and destiny. **I have blotted out:** The occasion of Israel's restoration to the land of Palestine was an indication that God had forgiven them of their foolish idolatry. The fact that He worked among the nations in order that they return to the land was evidence of His forgiveness of their apostasy. All those who realize their forgiveness in Jesus, work in thanksgiving and rejoice because of the grace of God (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

PROPHECY OF CYRUS

44:24-28 Redeemer: God would deliver them from the captivity from which they could not deliver themselves. He was the one who made Israel from the seed of Abraham, and He was the one who would preserve Israel for the coming of the Messiah. All such working in the history of Israel confounded those who believed in idols, which idols were lies that the apostates desired to believe. **Jerusalem ... will be inhabited:** Against the background of the destruction by Sennacherib, and eventually by the Babylonians, Jerusalem will be rebuilt. The prophecy was made long before the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. **Says to the deep:** If God dried up the Red Sea in order to free Israel from Egyptian captivity, then surely He will deliver Israel from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. **Cyrus:** This prophecy is so profound that liberal Bible students have often stated that Isaiah's prophecy was actually made during the time when Israel was in captivity in Babylon. But when God inspired prophecy to be made, there is no need to dodge the impact of the mention of a king in history that was made over a century before he lived (45:21; see comments Ez & Ne).

Chapter 45

This chapter presents the literal and earthly foundation upon which a metaphor of salvation is given for the spiritual Israel of God, the church. Cyrus was the "anointed" of God to bring national salvation to the Israelites by allowing them to return to their homeland of Pal-

estine. The Messiah of the future would be the anointed one of God who would release those who are in the bondage of sin. In their release from sin they would become the spiritual Israel of God, the church.

45:1-8 Cyrus would be the Medo-Persian king who would allow the captives to return to the land of Palestine. His name is identified for the purpose of witnessing to all men that it was God who was working through the nations on behalf of His people. Cyrus was anointed by God in order that we understand that He raised up Cyrus for a special purpose. The Medo-Persian Empire became a massive empire. From its beginnings of the old Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, it reached west to the Mediterranean Sea and south to the border of Egypt, thus encompassing all of Palestine. What actually took place when the Jewish captives returned to Palestine was that they resettled from one part of the Medo-Persian Empire to another region of the empire which was still under Medo-Persian control. Cyrus was allowed to conquer the armies to the west of Nineveh and Babylon in order to make it possible for God's people to resettle in the land of their heritage (See comments Ez & Ne). They simply resettled in another region of the Medo-Persian Empire **Gates:** This was the most fortified part of the city, for it was the entrance into all ancient cities. They were built of wood, and often overlaid with brass. When the gates were broken, the city fell. **No God besides Me:** This theme permeates all prophecies that refer to the restoration of

Israel to Palestine. God's work through the restoration was to prove that He was working with His people. Conquered and enslaved people were often simply assimilated into the life and societies of those nations who conquered them. But in Israel's case, they maintained their identity with the societies of their captors, and thus were the true Israel when God returned them to Palestine. They maintained their national purity when they returned in order that they be identified as the Israel of God when the Messiah came in fulfillment of the promises to the fathers (Gn 12:1-2; see comments Ez 10). All these things were done in order to prove that there is only one God who can do all these things among the nations of the world.

45:9,10 Man cannot change the eternal plan of God by following after his own will. Only idolaters seek to do this with their idol gods. But God works His plans, to which plans all men must submit.

45:11-13 Cyrus was a humanitarian king. He allowed people to return to their own homelands. God raised him up to accomplish this work in reference to the Israelites. When Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to Palestine, it was not for the purpose of reaping tribute from them. Allowing the Israelites to relocate within the Medo-Persian Empire was not an economic plan to profit the empire.

45:14-17 Israel was disgraced and shamed when they blasphemed God through idolatry. The nations accused that the God of Israel was no greater than the gods of their nations. But when Is-

rael was allowed to resettle Palestine, the nations took notice. The God who hides His ways until they are revealed, often does that which is contrary to the politics of the nations.

45:18,19 God created the world with order. He is not a God of chaos and confusion. When He speaks of things concerning the future, we can be assured that those things will come to pass. What He says can be clearly understood. His prophecies can be clearly understood to be fulfilled.

45:20-25 In this text Isaiah seems to go beyond the national restoration of Israel to Palestine. The national restoration is metaphorical of the restoration from the bondage of sin that would come through the revelation of the Son of God. The revelation of God through the Messiah would bring the opportunity that every knee bow (See comments Ph 2:5-11). The symbolic picture here is that many of all nations would come into a covenant relationship with God. They would be the spiritual Israel. Because all who come into the spiritual Israel will be justified from sin, they will give glory to God.

Chapter 46

OVERTHROW OF BABYLON

46:1,2 *Bel... Nebo:* These were two gods of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Bel was the equal to the Canaanite god Baal, which means "lord." Nebo means "revealer" or "speaker." The temple of Bel was in Babylon and the temple of Nebo was in Borsippa. The great idols of these gods were carried in ox carts

(carriages). They were so large that they were a burden to the animals who pulled the carts. The Babylonian King Merodachbaladan sought to carry away some of the idols of Babylon when Sennacherib threatened Babylon. However, he was overtaken, and the idols were taken by Sennacherib. *They stoop:* The Holy Spirit is very descriptive in this text in reference to His sarcasm concerning the idolatry of Isaiah's era. Idolatry was what brought Israel down, and thus the Spirit seeks to explain how foolish Israel and the nations were by trusting in the idol gods they made with their hands. The tottering gods of man only illustrated how men had stumbled into apostasy. *Themselves have gone into captivity:* The idol gods could not prevent themselves from going into captivity, much less save their worshipers from bondage.

46:3,4 *All the remnant of the house of Israel:* This is a significant statement in reference to the promises that were made to the fathers. When speaking of the restoration of Israel, reference was not only the restoration of the southern kingdom, but to all twelve tribes. In order that the promises be fulfilled, a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel had to be in Palestine when the Messiah came. There is no such thing as the lost ten tribes of Israel. *Upheld by Me from birth:* Israel was born out of Egyptian captivity and carried by God throughout her history (See Nm 11:12). Even when the nation became old, God was still with her through her apostasy and restoration.

46:5-7 Idol gods were dead. The idols were only the imagination of those

who had given up a knowledge of the true God of heaven. When men forsake the word of God they will create a god after their own image, which god will behave according to their desires. This happened in Israel and it happens among all men throughout the centuries. Simply because one claims to believe in God does not mean that he believes in the God who is identified in the Bible. One can understand the true God of heaven only through the Bible.

46:8-13 *Declaring the end from the beginning:* Once one makes a so-called prophecy of the future, and that prophecy does not come to pass, then that person was or is a false prophet. Only the omniscient God knows the future. Anyone who would be so presumptuous as to foretell the future has acted arrogantly in order to gather people to his group of misguided adherents. Prophecy is so foreign to the ability of man that anyone who would claim to prophesy concerning future events has identified himself as a false prophet. ***Ravenous bird:*** Reference could possibly be to Sennacherib, since God called him from the east in order to bring down judgment on Israel. ***Stouthearted:*** The Hebrew text refers to one who trusts in his own strength, or those who are self-sufficient.

Chapter 47

47:1-7 See 14:4-21. This is a song wherein God taunts the arrogant Babylonians for their ruthless treatment of His people. What the Babylonians did not consider was that God used them to discipline His people. Their bondage of Is-

rael was not of their own invention and power. Since they did not give credit to God for using them to correct His people, they will be stripped naked and taken into bondage themselves. They were as a queen in all her glory. But they would become humiliated by God when they become the victim of their own ill-treatment of God's people. From sitting on a throne, Babylon would sit in the dust.

47:8-15 As was common among pagan nations, the kings deified their kingdoms by deifying themselves (See Zp 2:15). In her human wisdom she arrogantly exalted herself above all nations. Because the Babylonians rejected any knowledge of the true God of heaven, they invented for themselves sources of their own wisdom. They acquired wisdom for themselves through their prognosticators and mediums. They developed a religion of mysticism that was subject to their reading of the stars and planets. They had thus wearied themselves with the futility of their search for knowledge from the physical world in order to discern matters of the spirit world. God challenged them to consult their normal mediums for wisdom in order that they gain understanding of the national calamity that was coming upon them. But the source of their supposed knowledge – their astrologers, star gazers and prognosticators – would be consumed.

Chapter 48

REBUKE OF THE UNFAITHFUL

48:1-11 In this chapter God brought to remembrance what He had done

through Israel. **Rebel from the womb:** From the time God brought Israel out of Egyptian captivity they were a stiff-necked people. They took pride in the fact that they were the people of the true God. But they soon forgot this as they started claiming for themselves the victories they had over others. They took pride in their preservation as a nation, and thus gave credit to their idols that they had made after the nations around them. So God resorted to prophecy in order to manifest the foolishness of their idols. His prophecy was so specific that they, through their idols, would have predicted the opposite of what would happen in their history. Therefore, lest they give credit to their idols, God worked in their history contrary to what men would have expected. **For My own sake:** God worked through Israel for His own glory. The existence of the nation, therefore, was not because they were a righteous people. God knew that centuries later we would be reading the history of the nation of Israel and come to the conclusion that there is a God, and that God works out the destiny of His eternal scheme of redemption regardless of wicked men (See comments Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

48:12-16 The eternal and unchangeable God created all things, and thus has not changed in His scheme of redemption through Israel. **Who ... declared these things:** Through their idols – the representation of their own intellect – they could never have foretold what God would do with them. But through His servants, the prophets, God revealed His

plan and brought it about throughout Israel's history. **I have called him:** Israel must understand that it was God who called the Babylonians to come upon His people. They must understand the reason why they were called. If they understand that the captivities happened because of their apostasy from God to idols, then there was hope for repentance. If they did not know the law well enough to understand this, then they were doomed.

48:17-19 If they had been obedient, they would have had peace throughout their history. They would have been helped by His precepts. God gives man freedom to make choices. When we make wrong choices we must pay the price that our sin brings upon us.

48:20-22 Their deliverance from Egyptian captivity seems here to be prophetic of a time when they would go forth from Babylonian captivity. When they went forth from Egypt, God provided sustenance in the desert. He would do the same after their repentance, and deliverance from Babylonian captivity. But He reminds them that there is no peace for the wicked, and thus they must come forth as a repentant people.

The Prince Of Peace

(49:1 – 57:21)

Outline: (1) Restoration of Israel and light for Gentiles (49:1 – 50:3), (2) The obedient Servant (50:4-11), (3) Words of comfort (51:1 – 52:12), (3) The Suffering Servant (52:13 – 53:12), (4) Jerusalem is glorified (54:1-17), (5) Grace for the obedient (55:1-13), (6)

Hope for the Gentiles (56:1-8), (7) Condemnation of wicked leadership (56:9 – 57:21)

Chapter 49

RESTORATION FOR ISRAEL AND LIGHT FOR GENTILES

49:1-4 In these verses the Suffering Servant is introduced where He speaks of Himself. He calls to the whole world concerning His mission. He is the One sent out from God, called from conception with a destiny. He is God's source of glory. He goes forth to do the will of God. Though His mission seems to bear no fruit, God will make sure of His reward. God kept his Servant close in His quiver. He was kept close until it was His time for ministry.

49:5,6 The Servant's mission was to be a restorer of Jacob and a redeemer of Israel. His mission was beyond the Jews in that He was to call the Gentiles. God's work through the spiritual Israel was to bring the Gentiles into His fold.

49:7 The physical nation of Israel was certainly the foundation of the metaphor for this reference to the suffering Servant of Jesus. The nation was abhorred by the nations of the world. But upon their victory over captivity, they were honored as a people. Jesus was despised and rejected, but upon His resurrection He was manifested to be for millions the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15)

49:8-13 Through travail, a time of forgiveness came. The Mediator of the covenant has come, and thus it is a day of salvation. Israel was restored to her

land that was left desolate. Those who were in bondage, now enjoyed their freedom in the light of the Savior. The released captives make their way home over highland pastures that are provided by God. They will come from all distant lands to which they were taken into captivity. *Sinim:* Even from the far east in the regions of India and China they will come. No matter how far His people were scattered throughout the world, they will be restored to God in their land. It would be a time for glorious jubilation.

49:14-21 Isaiah reassures Israel that God will not forget His people. He encouraged them by saying that those who destroyed them would be gone. It would be unthinkable that a mother would forget her child. Then certainly, God could never forget His children by leaving them in captivity. Jerusalem's walls are engraven on the palm of His hands. *Because of the inhabitants:* Israel will be embarrassed because they complained that God had forgotten them. There will be so many in the land that there will be little room for them. The restored Israelites to the land will be surprised to see the multitude who were born in captivity, but desired to return to the land of their fathers.

49:22,23 The reassurance of the prophecy is that the restored Israel will again populate the land. Those who held them captive will be their nursing fathers and mothers as they allow them to return to the land. The Medo-Persian Empire, through Cyrus, gave the Israelites the supplies they needed in order to return to the land and rebuild the city of Jerusa-

lem (See comments Ez & Ne). The fact of their return would be evidence that God was true to His people, and thus the true God among all the nations of the world.

49:24-26 The return of His people to the promised land proved that God is king over all nations of the world. He is stronger than those who lead others into captivity. He sets nations against one another in order to bring forth His people, which thing He did by setting the Medo-Persian Empire against the Babylonian Empire.

Chapter 50

50:1-3 *Divorcement ... sell:* There were some who would assume that God had estranged Himself from Israel for some unknown reason, or that He had given her to a creditor for some unknown debt. In the context here, He wants Israel to know that her separation from Him was caused by sin. She is totally responsible for the separation. She could place no blame on Him.

THE OBEDIENT SERVANT

50:4-6 God knows how to speak in a way that is helpful to those who sin. He knows how to listen to those who are repentant and seek to be obedient. If one comes to God obediently, He will listen to their prayers. But those who live in rebellion will find no answer from Him in reference to their sinful state of behavior. God works in the lives of those who seek to obey Him. *I gave My back:* The prophetic substance of this context looks forward to Jesus who was the manifestation of God's listening to those who

sought Him. The manifestation of the Son of God was God's answer to the prayers of the obedient who sought deliverance.

50:7-9 The text turns to the Servant of God who suffers at the hand of those who would persecute Him. Because of His faith, His adversaries seek His humiliation. But because He is assured that the Father is working with and through Him, He will fulfill His destiny. *Like a flint:* Nothing will stop Him from accomplishing the purpose for which He came into the world. Because God is working through Him, He has no reason to be ashamed of what He is doing. When one realizes that he is doing the will of God, he has no reason to be ashamed (Rm 1:16).

50:10,11 Those who fear the Lord are those who are obedient to His will. Though this person is walking in the darkness of this world, he looks toward the light. He must thus have faith in the faithfulness of God to be with him. But those who stir up strife and persecution for God's people have stirred up the punishment of hell for themselves (See Mt 25:41,46; 2 Th 1:6-9; 1 Pt 4:19).

Chapter 51

WORDS OF COMFORT

51:1-3 The plea is to look to the father of our faith, Abraham. He was the physical origin of Israel. He is the spiritual origin of all those who trust in God for direction. Those who live by faith are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. National Israel was born from the womb of Sarah. But the church was born from the faith of Abraham. *The Lord will*

comfort Zion: God will restore national Israel to her land that was laid waste. He will bring the repentant remnant once again into their homeland. Their faith was the foundation upon which God restored them first to Himself, and then to their homeland.

51:4-6 Hearken: This is the key word of the chapter. In order for God to perform His promises to the fathers, Israel must listen to the will of God. Sin led them into their predicament of being separated from God. Repentance will bring them back into the blessings of God. They will again be His people and His nation. He will restore His salvation to them. **A light of the people:** God's law will go forth as the light for all the nations of the world. The world will be enlightened by the word of God. The light would be a new law that would be applicable to all the world (See comments Jr 31:31-33; Mt 28:19,20). **Salvation will be forever:** Though all that man sees in this world will vanish away, God's word will abide forever. The word "forever" emphasizes the sustainability or certainty of the salvation in contrast to that which will pass away. Because it is sure and steadfast, the salvation will continue without end. Emphasis is on the steadfast existence of the salvation.

51:7,8 God's people do not need to be afraid of those who would persecute them simply because they will be preserved by the word of God long after those who persecute them will have passed into destruction.

51:9-11 Dragon: The crocodile of the Nile River. **Ransomed ... redeemed:**

The deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea is the literal and historical definition for these two metaphors in reference to the salvation of the saints. God's people were ransomed from captivity. Many Egyptians died in the Sea when they were redeemed. They were redeemed from a captivity from which they could not deliver themselves. The works of ransom and redemption, therefore, were the works of God, not something the people earned through their works.

51:12-16 Since God is the one who delivers, then there is no reason why one should fear man. The more we understand the greatness of God, the less we will fear those who seek to oppress us. Israel did not need to fear, therefore, because God had come to them with the proclamation that they were still His covenanted people.

51:17-20 God's people must be confident because God is their help. Israel had become a nation that was senselessly drunk on the idolatry of the nations. They subsequently wandered away from God. Their kings and leaders could not help them. They had brought themselves into a social stupor where no one could help. And then when they found themselves without mercy in captivity, God came for them.

51:21-23 Israel's deliverance meant that the fury that God released on her because of her sin, would be released on those who brought her into captivity. **The cup:** This was the cup of God's wrath. It was first poured out on Israel. Now it was going to be poured out on those who persecuted His people.

Chapter 52

52:1,2 This is a call to Jerusalem to dress up for glory. The unbelievers will never again strip Israel naked and humiliate her before the nations. This was a call to stand and be who she was destined to be. The captive people would be seated for honor.

52:3-6 The Israelites had sold themselves into bondage by disobedience. Through God's grace, however, they would be brought forth out of bondage. Their deliverance was free, for God could have left them in the captivity of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It was only by His grace that they were freed. God paid nothing to any nation in order to set His people free.

52:7-10 The good news of their deliverance not only went throughout Israel, but throughout all the nations (See comments Rm 10:14,15). The nations wondered at the survival of this nation that they thought would have assimilated with the nations, and subsequently lose her identity. **Your God reigns:** Israel's return to her homeland was evidence to the nations that God was working in His people. What all the nations thought was impossible – that Israel would again become a nation – God was able to do.

52:11,12 The Israelites would go out of captivity, not as they went out in haste from Egypt. They would go forth from captivity in peace in order to establish again the nationhood of the people. **Go out:** The call was for them to come out of captivity. Though all Jews did not return to their homeland of Palestine, there were thousands who did in order to rees-

tablish the identity of Israel (See comments Ez & Ne). Those who did not return remained among the nations in order to influence them to turn to the one true God. God needed only a remnant in Palestine in order to reestablish the identity of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. For world evangelism purposes in the future, He needed the rest to remain scattered among the nations. The scattered Jews would be the evangelism medium through whom the gospel would go into all the world (See comments Is 2:1-4; At 2).

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

52:13-15 Isaiah looked beyond the return to the captives to the time when the Son of Man, the Messiah, would come. Beginning with verse 13, and extending through the end of chapter 53, we are given in prophecy one of the most graphic word pictures of the Christ who would come to redeem God's people from the captivity of sin. He is pictured as the victorious priest who gives Himself as a ransom for the people of God. These verses introduce God's Servant. He commands all to behold Him. As the nations were astonished with the exaltation of Israel, so they will be astonished at the exaltation of the Servant Jesus. As the nations marveled at the suffering and deliverance of Israel, so they would marvel at the suffering and deliverance of the Savior. He would suffer, not because of His own sin, but because of the sins of others (See comments Ph 2:5-11). **Sprinkle many nations:** As the sprinkling of blood in reference to atonement,

and water as a sign of purification (Lv 14:7), so here the Servant would sprinkle nations in reference to expiation and sanctification. **Kings:** The awesome social impact the wounded Servant will have on the history of mankind will astound even those who are in high offices.

Chapter 53

53:1-3 *Who has believed our report:*

What is stated in this chapter is so astounding that few would believe that it was written over six hundred years before its fulfillment. No prophecy as this could have been fulfilled by accident. **Arm of the Lord:** God strongly intervened in history in order to bring about the fulfillment of this prophecy. **He grew up:** This prophecy is so certain of fulfillment, that the verb tenses are in the past tense. It is worded as if it had already come to pass. **Before Him:** Before the Father. **Tender plant:** Jesus was a suckling plant from the root of Jesse (11:1). **Dry ground:** He originated out of Galilee, one of the most unlikely places from which a great leader would be born (Compare Jn 1:46). **No form or comeliness:** Jesus' physical appearance did not demand attention. He was not attractive to look upon. **Despised and rejected:** As a revolutionary personality with His teaching and conduct, those in religious high places envied Him. His teaching was contrary to the Judaism that was taught during His lifetime. The envy of the religious leaders drove them to crucify Him. **Man of sorrows:** He was a man with our physical sicknesses, for He was incarnate in the likeness of man (Ph

2:5-8; Hb 4:15). **We hid:** Those who were with Him during His ministry would not stand with Him during His trials and crucifixion. He thus had to stand alone for us. **Did not esteem:** Many of those to whom He came did not accept Him as the Messiah and Son of God (Jn 1:10,11). Nevertheless, God accomplished His work through Him.

53:4-6 Borne our griefs: His salvational work for man was specific, and definitely carried out. Though many rejected Him, it was their grief and pains that He bore. **Carried:** He took up the burdens of our grief and carried them away. **Smitten by God:** Those who rejected Jesus, accused Him of being from Baalzebal, and thus stricken by God for assuming to be the Son of God (See Mk 14:61-64; Lk 22:37). **Wounded ... bruised:** This was His destiny. He did fall into the hands of wicked men, and subsequently was crucified for the sins of men. His death was not an accident, unplanned by God. It was for this very purpose that Jesus came into the world. He was crucified before the world was created (See comments Rv 13:8). He was bruised through crucifixion, but in being bruised, He crushed the head of Satan (See comments Gn 3:15). **We like sheep:** The world had wandered off into sin. The cross, therefore, was by grace, for there was no one who was righteous, and thus deserving of the forgiveness of God (Rm 3:9,10,23). **To His own way:** As with the spirit of idolatry, so is man in everything. He seeks to do only that which is right in his own eyes. He thus turns to satisfying the lust of the eyes and flesh,

while following after the pride of life. **Laid on Him:** He suffered on behalf of the wicked (See Mk 10:45). Since sin is against God, then God had to be incarnate in order to be the sacrificial lamb to bear the sins of men. Jesus came specifically into the world to be the sacrificial Lamb of God.

53:7-9 Jesus was harshly treated and humiliated for our sake. He humbled Himself to be mistreated by those whom He had created (See Cl 1:16; compare Ph 2:5-8). **He did not open His mouth:** Jesus took Himself to the cross. He had the power to lay down His own life for our sins (Jn 10:17,18). He had the power to take it up again. When it came time for His death, He did not open His mouth in order to defend His innocence. He allowed Satan to work in men in order to take Himself to the cross. **Lamb to the slaughter:** He was the sacrificial lamb of God (Jn 1:36; Rv 5:12). **By oppression and judgment:** Jesus suffered from the tyranny of evil men, and thus He suffered the violence of men and unjust judgment. **Who will declare:** The people were indifferent during the crucifixion. They allowed jealous religious leaders to crucify Him. **Grave with the wicked:** Dishonor and humiliation followed Jesus from the cross even to the grave. **No violence:** He had done nothing by which He deserved the treatment He received.

53:10-12 **Pleased the Lord:** God willed the cross for the sake of those who would believe. The Father allowed His Son to go through the humiliation of the suffering for the sake of those who would be drawn to the cross. **His seed:** Chris-

tians are the seed of the Servant. We are the seed because we have believed and obeyed the gospel of His death and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Jesus is now reigning at the right hand of God, and continues to prosper as people are obedient to the gospel. He now sees the results of His work, and rejoices over our obedience. Though Jesus had to travail in His labor to bring us forth as the people of God, He is satisfied with His work. His death was successful and sufficient for the salvation of men. **I will divide Him a portion:** Jesus was worthy to receive the blessing of the church because He gave Himself for all those who have obeyed His death, burial and resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Jesus was worthy to receive glory, honor and power because He was crucified for transgressors (See comments Rv 4:11).

Chapter 54

JERUSALEM IS GLORIFIED

54:1-3 The historical foundation of the metaphor that refers to the bride and new Jerusalem find their meaning in this context. The new Jerusalem is composed of those who are called out of the world by the gospel. The church is thus the assembly of those who have been wooed by the gospel. The bride, the church, is wooed and wed. There is a restoration of the people of God to the point that they are new in His presence. All this is the result of the work of the Suffering Servant who accomplished His work that is pictured in chapter 53. **Sing, O barren one:** The exodus of the exiles from captivity portrays the new exodus that would

come as a result of the calling by the sacrificial Servant of God. The restored people of God would compose an exodus from the captivity of sin. **Enlarge the place of your tent:** The exiles of the new exodus would far exceed those who returned from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The new exodus would be composed of those from all the world, both Jews and Gentiles. As a nomadic family must enlarge their tent in order to accommodate the growth of the family, so the spiritual tent of God must be enlarged in order to bring in all people of all nations (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

54:4-8 Not be ashamed: Israel will not have to be ashamed of her youth in the bondage of Egypt. Neither will she be disgraced by her captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians. God gave birth to Israel, and thus was her father who would bring her out of the widowhood of captivity. Though for a short time God hid His face from her while she was in captivity, that time would pass and she would remember it no longer. **God of the whole earth:** Israel must never forget that God is not the God of Israel alone. In fact, the existence of Israel was based on the fact that God was seeking to send the Savior of the world into the world. Israel existed solely for the purpose of fulfilling the promise of the Blessing that would come from the seedline of Abraham, which Blessing would accomplish the work that was described in chapter 53. **Wife of youth:** Israel was God's "wife of youth" until the bride, the church, was brought forth. **A brief moment:** For a short time God abandoned

Israel in captivity, but she was brought forth a penitent bride who remained loyal to her Maker.

54:9,10 Waters of Noah: These words clearly state that the flood of Noah's day was not a local washout, but a global calamity that changed the face of the entire earth. God promised Noah and all life that He would never again destroy the world through such a flood of waters. He promised the redeemed Israel that He would never again allow her to be taken into captivity (See Gn 9:12-17).

54:11-17 God now turns to the calamity that befell the city of Jerusalem. The new spiritual Jerusalem would never suffer as the physical Jerusalem when it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. **I will lay your stones:** The metaphors that picture the new Jerusalem give hope and comfort for the future to a national Israel that was at the time of Isaiah undergoing threats from the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians. When Isaiah wrote these words the temple was still standing. He speaks of a reconstruction, but the reconstruction is not of the temple in Jerusalem. In the picture here of the new Jerusalem, the temple is not mentioned. The temple of David was never in the original plan of God for Israel. It was David's desire which God accommodated. God always wanted His people to feel a direct connection with Him as they worked the land throughout Palestine. The temple centralized His presence, and thus always left some in Israel feeling too far from the symbol of the presence of God. In the new Jerusalem,

the church, God would always be present wherever the church existed. His presence would not be identified by a physical structure (See comments Jn 4:19-24). His presence would be identified by those with whom He dwelt (Lk 17:20,21). **Taught by the Lord:** See Jn 6:45. **If anyone fiercely assails you:** Though the church would be persecuted, the persecution would not originate from God. God formerly used the nations to discipline His people, but He would not do such with the church. **No weapon ... will prosper:** No evil nation or force would ever destroy the church. After the establishment of the new Jerusalem, the church, it would never go out of existence. The beauty of the picture is in the fact that the restored people of God would carry on throughout eternity. Therefore, we must see in the restoration of Israel from captivity more than a simple restoration of Jews to the land of Palestine. The remnant that returned was the seed from which the church would begin five centuries later. Then the church, after centuries on earth, would transition into a heavenly dwelling that is yet to come. All this Isaiah pictures before the physical city of Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It was an incredible prophecy at the time, and something that was certainly not understood by the first recipients. Isaiah himself surely did not understand what he was saying and writing (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12).

Chapter 55

GRACE FOR THE OBEDIENT

55:1-5 Attention is drawn to the blessings that have resulted from the word of the Servant of chapters 53 & 54. The call is to the many of the seed of Israel who blossomed from her restoration and the building of the new Jerusalem. **Without price:** God's grace is free. If they heeded the invitation to come, they would receive more than that for which they could pay through good works. They could not merit what the Lord had to offer. The invitation to freely eat and drink of that which the Lord offers is to all men (Jn 3:16). **Everlasting covenant:** See comments Jr 31:31-34. **Sure mercies of David:** Reference is to the grace of God that would be extended through the Messiah (See 2 Sm 7:4-17; Ps 89:34,35). David was one who gave himself to the people in order to lead the people according to the will of God. David was a prophet and king, and thus exemplified in his life a prophetic picture of the One who would come to lead the people. **Nations ... will run to you:** The Gentiles would come to the Messiah who would come out of Israel.

55:6,7 God is always present to accept the repentance of those who seek to turn from their wayward paths. There is urgency in repentance, not that God will leave us, but that we may lose our opportunity to repent. Death may steal away our opportunity, or we may become so hardened of heart that we feel no pricking of the conscience in reference to our sin (See comments 2 Pt 2:20-22).

55:8-13 *My thoughts are not your thoughts:* Contrary to the spirit of idolatry that plagued Israel, God does not be-

have as they conceived their idolatrous gods to behave. He was not created after the imagination of the minds of man, because He created man. **Higher:** God is beyond the comprehension of man, and thus He is not the invention of man. Only those who are frustrated in their efforts to understand God fully, or want God to behave as they so choose, seek to create false gods whom they can understand. But when we imagine a god that we can fully understand, then we can be assured that we have imagined the wrong god. **So will My word:** God's word will produce fruit as sure as rain from the heavens. It is the word of God that changes the hearts of man (Hb 4:12). When one responds to the word of God, it produces those who are of God. If the pure word of God is spoken, then it will transform the lives of those who have a sincere heart. It will change the hearts of the proud into hearts of thanksgiving (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

Chapter 56

HOPE FOR THE GENTILES

56:1-8 The promise in this context focuses on those against whom the nationalistic Jews were prejudiced, the Gentiles. God's grace was to all men. **Keeps the Sabbath:** The Sabbath was given as a sign of the covenant that God had established with national Israel. The symbolism in this context, therefore, is in reference to those who come to the people of God and keep the sign of the covenant. Reference here is to the eunuchs and the Gentiles. When national Israel was still in existence, one had to

keep the Sabbath in order to indicate that he submitted to the law of the covenant. If he wanted to make his home with the Israelites, the eunuch and foreigner had to honor the Sabbath. When one became a proselyte, he was not to be discriminated against, or made to feel that he had no part with Israel. If he kept the Sabbath and obeyed the law of the covenant, then he was to be accepted into the nation of Israel. Though the eunuch had been castrated, and thus could not produce a physical heritage, he must be reassured that he would have a spiritual heritage with the family of God. Though the foreigner had no land possession with Israel, he must be reassured that he would have a part with Israel. **Everyone who keeps the Sabbath:** The interpreter must not make the mistake of failing to transition from the literal to the spiritual in this context. National Israel is metaphorically used to refer to the church. The church, therefore, is not national Israel. Circumcision and the Sabbath were signs by which national Israel was to be identified and separated from the nations of the world. But these are not literal signs that now identify the spiritual Israel of God. It is circumcision of the heart that identifies the people of God today (Cl 2:11-14). In Jesus, identity of discipleship has moved from the physical to the spiritual. It is not keeping of the literal Sabbath that identifies the disciples of Jesus. It is the keeping of every day of the week as a total commitment of the transformed life (Rm 12:1,2). Discipleship has changed from focus on one day, to every day. **Gathers the outcasts:** The prejudi-

cial Jews must remember that they were at one time outcasts among the nations. When God gathered them from among the nations, their attitudes had to be changed in reference to those they formerly considered outcasts, that is, the eunuchs and Gentiles. **House of prayer:** What was considered a privilege by the Israelites would be the right of all men (See Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Jn 10:16; Ep 2:17; 1 Th 5:17). Every disciple of Jesus has direct contact with God through prayer. God's people today no longer look to a physical temple in order to pray, but pray directly to God wherever they are.

CONDEMNATION OF WICKED LEADERSHIP

56:9-12 By reviewing the ravaging of Judah's territory by the nations, God summons the people to heed what He has to say about Judah's judgment to come. This is a picture of a degraded and immoral society that was ripe for purging. The nation had wearied itself with idolatry. The leaders had burdened the people with their lack of understanding. **Come to eat all you beasts:** God summoned the Assyrians to come and feast on Israel. **Watchmen are blind:** Judah's leaders were aloof to the impending judgment of God. **Ignorant:** Their false prophets spoke of peace, when the beast of Assyria was about to devour them. **Mute dogs:** Instead of sounding forth an alarm, the watchmen spoke nothing, for they believed that Jerusalem would never fall. **Greedy ... look to their own way:** The full-time prophets were more concerned

for their own well-being than the safety of the nation. They sought to secure their support more than minister to the people. They were blind guides for the people. They were lazy. They were cowards. And they were consumed in their own self-indolence and greed.

Chapter 57

57:1,2 This is a picture of a nation that has given itself over to moral degradation. No one cares for the righteous. When he dies, no one takes notice. This is the social condition of Israel before God sent the Assyrians against the northern kingdom, and later the Babylonians against the southern kingdom. When a society loses its moral direction, it turns on itself. It is worthless for protecting the righteous and for producing souls for heaven.

57:3-10 Sorceress ... adulterer ... harlot: The children of wicked parents continue the legacy of their parents. In this case, they continued the debauchery of an idolatrously degenerate parentage. Isaiah's generation was made up of those of idolatrous fathers and mothers who passed on to their children a heritage of idolatry and moral degradation. They were thus children of lawbreakers and liars. The society morally degraded to the point of sacrificing the children to false gods they imagined in their minds. It was a society that was ready to be given over to destruction. **Behind the door:** Their sexual passions were unleashed behind closed doors where they practiced orgies and fornication. They believed in an assortment of gods who would con-

done their wicked behavior. They thus sacrificed to gods they believed were in the valleys, on mountains, in their houses, and wherever they would satisfy their lusts with immoral behavior. **Looked on their manhood:** They venerated the genital organs, a common practice among pagan religions. Their carving pornography gave witness to the fact that sex became the focus of society and the relationships between men and women. Exaltation of Asherah worship and the debauchery of Molech worship corrupted their thinking and moral behavior. They became a society of no moral return, producing children of like mind, and thus God consigned them to destruction as He did Sodom and Gomorrah. However, He would sift out a remnant for the future fulfillment of prophecy. **“There is no hope”:** They did not have the moral sense of realizing that they were on a road to no moral return. Their life-style of debauchery would be the end of them.

57:11-13 They feared man more than God, and thus followed after the social pressures to live according to the degraded morals of the day. God had been patient with Israel throughout her history. But now it was time for judgment. When the calamity of judgment came, God told them that their idols would not answer when they cried out for help. When the prophets of their idolatrous worship proclaimed peace, God would bring calamity in order to teach them that their idols were useless. **Your righteousness:** God sarcastically refers to their self-righteousness. They claimed to be righteous, but their righteousness was according to the

religion that they had created after their own desires. Their works that they believed were right, were actually contrary to the will of God. They had indeed created a religion after their own desires, and gods, who in their minds, condoned their wicked behavior. **Carry them all away:** The destiny of idol gods and their worshipers is destruction, for when the worshipers are taken away, so are the gods that they created in their minds.

57:14-21 Build up: The way was prepared for restoration by removing the wickedness of the people that was defined in the preceding verses (See 40:3; 62:10). **Idwell:** Though God is exalted above the heavens, at the same time the omnipresent God dwells in the hearts of the humble and contrite. **Iniquity of his unjust gain:** While dwelling in the hearts of the contrite, God judges those who live in sinful rebellion. God judged His people for their rebellion, and then hid Himself from them while they were in captivity. Once they repented, He revealed Himself in order to heal them of their sinful ways. He tore them down through captivity. He built them up through restoration to their homeland. **Peace:** Though the wicked will have no peace in this life, the repentant enjoy the peace of God that passes all understanding (Ph 4:7).

Peace From God

(58:1 – 66:24)

Outline: (1) Contrast between truth and false worship (58:1-14), (2) Confession and salvation (59:1-21), (3) Peace and prosperity for the redeemed (60:1-22),

(4) The mission of the Messiah (61:1-11), (5) Restoration of Zion (62:1 – 63:6), (6) Prayer for pardon and preservation (63:7 – 64:12), (7) Blessing of the future Israel (65:1-25), (8) Sincere worship (66:1-24)

Chapter 58

58:1-5 Cry aloud: Isaiah must not be timid about announcing the message of this context. He must be bold and lift up his voice like a trumpet. **Show ... their transgression:** It is the duty of the preacher of God to reveal the sin of the people by comparing their behavior with the word of God. In this context there are those who present their religious behavior before the Lord, but wonder why He does not answer, or respond to their religiosity. They fast, and there is no response from God. They offer their sacrifices, but there is no one there to accept them. They were performing the right religious rituals, but they were insincere. Their insincerity was manifested through their unrighteous behavior. One must never assume that the religious rituals one may practice are a manifestation of a humble heart. Neither must one assume that he is declared righteous by the insincere performance of religious rituals. **They take delight in approaching unto God:** The deception was that they had created religious behavior after their own desires. They deceived themselves into believing that if they performed religious ordinances, God would respond to their needs. Their apostasy was not that they became irreligious, or gave up faith, but that their religious behavior became insincere.

58:6-12 One can legally perform the rituals of the law, and still live contrary to its principles. These people presented a false humility. They were more concerned about a successful business, than the evil of exploiting their employees. It was inconsistent to legally fast, and at the same time be hard on their laborers, refusing to feed the poor, and even refusing to care for one's own family. Their motive for fasting, therefore, was to obligate God to respond on their behalf. But they were wrong, for the spirit of true fasting involves sincere humility and a life-style of mercy. Their purpose for keeping the Sabbath had to be restored. They must restore the Sabbath as an opportunity to focus on the Lord, not simply as a time to rest from their labors. **Then your light will break out:** If they would correct their behavior in their relationships with their fellow man, then their pleas to the Lord would bring a response. **The Lord will answer:** Answered prayer, therefore, is dependent on one's righteous behavior, not one's performance of religious rites. If they would respond to God's will, God would respond with His presence. His presence would be manifested through His blessing of them. When others would witness the blessing of God upon them, the generations that would follow would give them praise. **Your sons:** Though they would have to go into captivity, and the nation of Israel be destroyed, the generation that would follow them would be restored because of the repentance of the fathers. If they passed on a spiritual legacy of repentance to their children,

there would be good times for their children. When the fathers repent, the children see in them their commitment to the Lord. There is nothing greater to give as an inheritance to our children than a spiritual legacy.

58:13,14 *Not doing your own ways:* They had made the Sabbath a time to speak of business deals or seeking pleasures of this world. Instead of focusing on the Lord on the Sabbath rest, they took the opportunity to carry on with business arrangements. But if they would turn from such worldly mindedness on a day that was to be devoted to spiritual thinking, God would turn to them with blessings.

Chapter 59

CONFESSION AND SALVATION

59:1-8 Isaiah described here the social degradation of the society that led to their captivity. *Shortened:* God does not leave us. We leave Him. He does not stop listening. We stop speaking to Him in prayer. *Separated between you and your God:* When in sin, we cease our communication with and dependence on God. We thus separate ourselves from Him. When in sin, He feels distant from us because we have distanced ourselves from Him. *Hidden His face:* The face of God is toward us to help. But when we turn our back on Him, we walk in the darkness of our own shadow of sin. God cannot look upon sin, for sin is against who God is. As long as one continues to live in sin, God cannot look upon him. *Hands ... fingers ... lips ... tongue:* They used their entire being as instruments for

sin. *Justice:* The judicial system was corrupted. *Trust in vanity:* They trusted in the chaos of society, and thus no justice could come to the righteous. *Conceive mischief:* See Gn 6:5. *Viper's eggs:* What they produced was spiritually dead. *Spider's web:* They did their works in order to entrap others. They were a society that was morally imploding and in a state of self-destruction. They were a society that hurried to do evil (Mk 7:14-23). *Innocent blood:* See comments Hb 11:32-38. It is possible that Isaiah himself suffered death at the hands of Manasseh who succeeded Hezekiah. The society had digressed to the point that innocent people were being killed because of the crime of others.

59:9-14 The oppressed during the reign of Manasseh could find no justice in society. There was no hope since society had morally spiralled down to the point of no moral return. The righteous had no hope that their injustices would be righted. They looked for a gleam of light, but there was no hope in sight. Society was so perverse that the righteous groped for direction, and could find none. People morally stumbled along because there was no correct moral standard by which they could direct their lives. It was a nation that had forgotten God's laws because they had turned their backs on God (Hs 4:6). *Roar like bears:* Their complaints to God did not bring them relief from social injustice because they would not enact God's law in their lives. They scoffed at the law and prophets of the law as Isaiah. *Sins testify against us:* Their behavior was the evidence that

they had forsaken God (Ez 8:6-15; Dn 9:5-15). The deplorable picture that Isaiah paints probably took place during the last years of his life and during the early reign of Manasseh. His speaking out in this way possibly led to his death. The degradation of society at the time was beyond repair within itself. It was a society that could be repaired only through captivity. **Truth has fallen:** When a society gives up truth and equity, it is destined to self-destruction. We must keep in mind that the written law of God, the Torah, was probably lost to the people. We could assume this because a copy of the law was found during repairs to the temple during the reign of Josiah (2 Kg 22). It seems that even the religious leadership of Israel did not have a copy of the law until a copy was discovered in the repairs of the temple.

59:15-19 Departs from evil: Those who did not practice evil policies would be overtaken by the abundance of evil that prevailed throughout society. **The Lord saw it:** When God takes notice of evil, He takes action. **No intercessor:** When God saw the moral mess of their wicked society, He was shocked that no one stood up for the righteous against the oppression of the day. He could find no one who was concerned by the state of moral degradation and injustice into which they had fallen. It was at this time in their history that God had to take direct action. Therefore, He intervened on behalf of the righteous remnant in order to save them from total destruction. God sought to save a remnant of Israel, and in order to do so, He had to intervene on

their behalf. **He put on righteousness:** Isaiah pictures a deliverance beyond the physical remnant of Israel. He looks into the future when the Savior would come into the world for the spiritual salvation of God's people (See Ep 6:14-17; 1 Th 5:8). **Breastplate:** Righteousness protects the heart. **Helmet:** When one thinks right, he does right. **Garment:** The One who would come would clothe himself in the word of God. **Cloak:** The zeal to accomplish the will of God would characterize the ministry of the Servant who was to come. **They will fear:** Unless men fear God, they will not repent. **When the enemy comes:** When the enemy attacks the righteous, the Holy Spirit will lift up a banner of defense for the righteous and against the wicked.

59:20,21 The Redeemer will come: The Savior of the world would come to Jerusalem. Those who turn to the Redeemer in repentance will have the privilege of coming into a new covenant relationship with God (See comments Jr 31:31-33). Isaiah ends with hope. The hope that is given is not in the salvation of physical Jerusalem or Israel, but in the spiritual salvation of the repentant that would carry on throughout eternity.

Chapter 60

PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR THE REDEEMED

60:1-3 Light has come: Isaiah places himself at the time of the fulfillment of the Light that comes first to Jerusalem, and then into the world for the salvation of all men (Jn 8:12). The Light first breaks upon the tops of the mountains, but it will

go into all the world. The Light will go from Israel and spread to all humanity (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). **Gentiles:** The nations will come to the Light that radiates from Israel.

60:4-9 There will be a joyous homecoming for Israel after the captivity. The literal and historical event upon which the metaphor is based is significant. A remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned from the bondage of captivity. They came to the radiant Jerusalem. However, the symbolic picture is of the spiritual Zion, the new Jerusalem, the church, to which all tribes of the earth would flow (See comments 2:1-4). It would be a spiritual homecoming for all lovers of God. **They will come:** We must picture literal Jerusalem lying in desolation from the destruction of the Babylonians. But when the Medo-Persian King Cyrus allowed the captives to return to their homelands, Israelite captives came from all the territories to which they had been scattered by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They came with their wealth in order to rebuild the city (See comments Ez & Ne). They came from all directions to Jerusalem in order to restore her former glory.

60:10-14 **Foreigners ... kings:** Those who destroyed Jerusalem would aid in its reconstruction. Mercy will replace wrath. The gates of the city will continually be opened to receive others, to receive trade, and to receive the homage of every nation. Those who once despised Israel would pay homage to her.

60:15,16 The city that was once rejected by the nations, becomes the focal

point of their spiritual interest. She does not become such because of the national existence of Israel through her restoration, but because of the presence and work of the Redeemer.

60:17,18 Wealth would replace poverty (Compare comments Mt 5:1-9). Justice would be restored. Peace would administer between the citizens of the city, and righteousness would oversee all relationships. Injustice would cease between citizens. The defense of the city would be its salvation, and its strength would be the praise of God. The symbolism of the context takes us beyond the literal city of Jerusalem into the environment of the church that was to come.

60:19-22 God will be the light of the new Jerusalem because those who are her citizens will have submitted to His will (See Rv 21:23). Righteousness will dwell within the city, for all those who are citizens will have submitted to the will of God (Rv 21:27). It will no longer be that one is born physically into the city, as was the case with national Israel. But in the future one is spiritually born into the city (See comments Jr 31:31-34). **Inherit the land forever:** In the context, Isaiah has gone beyond the physical homeland of Israel, to the spiritual dwelling of the righteous. Since the context is symbolic, this statement must also be understood in the same context. The "land" is metaphorical of the eternal possession that the righteous receive upon their obedience to the gospel. **Become a thousand:** The spiritual Israel by faith, the church, would grow far beyond the physical Israel. **A strong nation:** The church.

Chapter 61

RESTORATION OF ZION

61:1-3 Isaiah breaks into prophecy of the Anointed One who comes to preach the good news of deliverance and judgment (See Mk 1:1,14). He comes with a message of hope for the humble, comfort for the brokenhearted, and freedom for those in bondage. All that would befall Israel in captivity is here used symbolically to refer to the mission of the Messiah and the salvation that He would bring to those who submit to the good news.

61:4-7 *Rebuild:* At the time the prophecy was made, the cities of the northern kingdom were in ruins because of the devastation of the Assyrians. Judah was concerned about the destruction of the cities that they had inhabited for centuries. This prophecy of Isaiah was that the cities would be rebuilt. ***Named the priest of the Lord:*** God originally established Israel as a nation of priests, though there was within Israel the Levitical priesthood that ministered to the nation of priests. As a nation of priests, they were to be representatives of God to all the nations that would pass through the land of Palestine. However, they forsook their priesthood responsibilities by adopting the beliefs of pagan gods. In the future, however, their priesthood would be restored. The nations would support them as representatives of God, which purpose they had forsaken (See comments 1 Pt 2:5,9).

61:8-9 *Hate:* See Pv 6:16-19. Israel had been humiliated and shamed by the plundering of the Assyrians, and

eventually, Judah would suffer the same at the hands of the Babylonians. But because God hates the plundering of one people of another people, He would judge the Assyrians and Babylonians for their deeds. Their judgment would be that they would cease to be kingdoms of this world.

61:10,11 Instead of destruction coming from the nations upon Israel and Judah, righteousness and praise would come. The persecuted would be adorned by the persecutor. God's people would be adorned in their salvation. They would thus become a fruitful people throughout all the world. God's people, the church, would attract those of the world who are seeking the salvation of God. The borders of the church, therefore, would reach into all nations (See comments Mt 28:19,20).

Chapter 62

RESTORATION OF ZION

62:1-5 It is not clear who the speaker is in this text. It could be God speaking through Isaiah. The most probable speaker is the same as chapter 61. The Servant of God, the Messiah, would not rest until He had accomplished His mission. Righteousness is the light that would go forth and salvation the burning flame. ***A new name:*** Because the new Jerusalem will be transformed, she would be deserving of a new identity. It is a name that is known only by God (65:15), and thus can be announced only by Him (See Rv 2:17; 3:12). The name will identify the holiness of the repentant new Jerusalem. ***Forsaken ... Desolate:*** In the captivities, Jerusalem was forsaken, and

the land left desolate. **Hephzibah:** Literally, “My delight in her.” **Beulah:** Literally, “married.” God would delight in the new Jerusalem. The land would be cultivated and productive. **Your land will be married:** The farmers were married to the land. This is symbolic of the fact that God will be married to His people. The sons would be married to the land in the sense that they would again nurture and cultivate the land, just as God nurtures His fold which He cultivates for His glory.

62:6-9 Watchmen: The prophets were the watchmen for God. They perceived the social conditions of the people, and then proclaimed the message of God. The duty of the watchmen was to give warning. In 56:10 the watchmen did not carry out their duties. It was the purpose of God’s watchmen to proclaim the promises of God, and then intercede for the people through prayer that God keep His promises to His people. **The Lord has sworn:** Based on His greatness and power to fulfill, God is about to commit Himself to a promise that He will fulfill (See comments Hb 6:14-20). His promise here is that Israel would never again succumb to the plundering of foreign nations. They had suffered from the results of their sins, which suffering God had foretold (Dt 28:33,51; see Jg 6:4,11; 2 Ch 28:18; Is 16:9).

62:10-12 Isaiah ends with a prophecy of the coming Messiah. Based on the returning captives from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, the prophecy reaches into the future to the time when the Messiah would come into Jerusalem.

Go through the gates: The double imperative command may refer to going out from captivity through the gates of bondage. The highway was symbolic of their return to the land. It was to be an easy way back to Jerusalem with a banner that would rally the people together for the exodus. **Your salvation comes:** The exiles were saved from bondage. The new spiritual Jerusalem was saved from the bondage of sin by the coming of the Redeemer. **Holy people:** The citizens of the new Jerusalem will have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, and thus they would never again be forsaken by God. The redeemed church of the Lord would be composed of people from all nations (Rv 7:9)

Chapter 63

This is a symbolic chapter that pictures Israel’s conflict with the Edomites. Emphasis in the picture is on the Conqueror who marches in victory over the enemy of God’s people.

63:1-6 Edom: Edom was the enemy of Israel since the days when Israel came out of Egyptian captivity. As the descendants of Esau, the nation continually set themselves against the Israelites (Hb 12:16). The symbolic picture here is of God’s total destruction of all of Israel’s enemies, which would include Edom (See 45:19-24). **Bozrah:** Edom’s capital. **I will tread them in My anger:** Since Edom was the perpetual enemy of Israel, then the nation was the ideal symbol to represent God’s destruction of all those who would set themselves, or had set themselves, against His people. In

God's restoration of Israel, no nation would be allowed to work against what God would do to bring His people back to Palestine. **Day of vengeance:** The trampling of Edom was representative of all those nations who had fought against Israel throughout her history. No nation was worthy to set itself against God's people, even though God used pagan nations to discipline Israel throughout her history. Because the pagan nations were ungodly, God brought vengeance upon them for harming His people (61:2). **I will tread down:** See 51:17; Ps 75:8; Jr 25:15; Rv 14:18-20. As one treads down the grapes in order to extract the grape juice, God would trample down Edom. In the same manner, Jesus, the King over all things, has trampled down the nations for the sake of the church (Jn 16:11; Rv 19:11-16).

PRAYER FOR PARDON AND PRESERVATION

63:7-10 Isaiah here takes his place with the people of God, though he remains their prophet who laments their sin before God. **Lovingkindness:** God's grace in the history of Israel was steadfast and loyal. **He was afflicted:** When Egypt afflicted God's children, they afflicted God (Gn 15:13; Ex 1:8). **Angel of His presence:** Compare Ex 14:19; Jg 13:6; At 27:23. This is probably a reference to the Angel of the Lord (Gn 16:7; Nm 22:23; Jg 13:3), the preincarnate Son of God (See Ex 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2). **Fought against them:** God is the enemy of those who work against His work (Lm 2:3-5; see Hb 10:31). Israel was the

work of God to bring the Savior of all men into the world. But because of their apostasy, they worked against this plan. He worked against them with discipline in order to preserve a remnant that would remain in the land until the coming of the Messiah.

63:11-14 They remembered: In order for one to repent, it is necessary to remember the former times when one faithfully walked with God. When Israel, in her apostasy, remembered how God had brought the nation out of Egyptian captivity through the leadership of Moses, they yearned for those days. They yearned for God to work again in the nation in order to deliver them from their enemies. **Where is He:** God delivered them by bringing them out of the Red Sea. He sustained them by the Holy Spirit who worked within them. He defended them by bringing the waters of the Red Sea upon the Egyptian army. He did all this in order to give evidence to the world that He was the only God and that Israel was His people (Ex 9:16). **Led them through the deep:** God led Israel safely through the wilderness for 40 years in order to bring them to the land of promise.

63:15-19 These words were delivered to the people at a time of national calamity. Isaiah representatively speaks for the people as they face an uncertain future. **Look down:** He pleads for God's concern (See Ps 33:13,14). Feeling that God has distanced Himself from them, he pleads that God come down from heaven in order to deliver them. **Your zeal and Your strength:** As in the days

when God with a strong arm delivered Israel out of Egyptian captivity, he asked that God deliver them again out of the certain peril in which they were at the time these words were written. **You are our Father:** Earthly fathers may forget their wayward children, but surely God would not forget His children of Israel. **Our redeemer:** See Jb 19:25; Ps 19:14; 73:35. God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian captivity. He was their Father, and thus the closest relative who would have the responsibility to redeem them, or purchase them out of slavery. **Made us to stray:** God allowed them to live in an environment wherein they would be tempted with apostasy. He knew that they would not destroy all the Canaanites from the land, so He allowed them to suffer from their own sin of not removing all the pagans from the land. God will take the responsibility for this historical failure on the part of Israel. However, He held them accountable for their free-will disobedience to His command to eradicate the Canaanites from the land. The inspired question here, therefore, is a complaint for allowing them to reside in a situation where they would be led astray. The answer to the question is that God allows His people to live in an environment wherein they can be tempted. If they fall, however, they will be held accountable for their sin, for God gave all men the ability to freely make choices concerning moral behavior. This scenario of a free-moral individual living in an environment where choices can be made was necessary in order that God stand just in final judgment. If one is

condemned because he chooses to live in sin, then God is just for condemning one who freely made the choice to live in sin. **Hardened our heart:** Man hardens his own heart when with a rebellious attitude he confronts the will of God. The more one knowingly works against the will of God, the harder his heart becomes. Because Israel hardened her heart against God, she became as the pagan nations among whom God never worked directly as He did with Israel. She became no different than the Assyrians and Babylonians who led her away into captivity.

Chapter 64

64:1-7 This prayer is for God's intervention. And when God intervenes, all creation trembles. **Split the heavens:** Isaiah asked for another revelation of the presence of God as He appeared on Mt. Sinai before Israel. When the Creator of all things appears among those things that He created, they split, quake and tremble. The material world cannot bear the presence of God. God created natural laws in order to control the physical world. However, when He sets aside these natural laws, the physical world comes apart (Compare comments Hb 1:3). **That the nations may tremble:** The reason for the request for the presence of God was that those who threatened Israel might flee in terror. **For which we did not look:** Israel did not expect to see the awesome revelations of God that took place in their history when they came out of Egyptian captivity and made their way to Canaan. **Mountains:** Mt. Sinai, and the surrounding mountains, quaked when God ap-

peared to Moses and all Israel. **A God besides You:** Herein is proof that God has never allowed Satan to work any miraculous wonders as those that have been worked by God. If God allowed Satan to miraculously work among men, then certainly He would be working inconsistently. God would never allow Satan to work in a manner that would cancel the evidence of His own miraculous work. Since all false gods are the imagination of men, then it is only men who imagine that there are miraculous workings in their lives that they attribute to Satan. It was the futile effort of the false prophets to convince men that their gods were working miracles among the people (See comments At 8:1-25). **In them a long time:** They continued in their rebellion for so long that their culture became the rebellion. Their self-imposed social morals became customary, and thus they were not able to return to the will of God (See Hs 13:2). They could not be saved from destruction if they continued to live after the moral standards that they had created for themselves. When immoral and unjust practices become the culture of the people, it is extremely difficult to change them. **Filthy rags:** As the menstuous cloth was to be discarded, so their behavior that was contrary to the will of God was to be discarded (See Lv 15:19-24). **No one who calls:** They had fallen so far away from God that they no longer cried out to Him for help. They sought deliverance through their own ingenious plans and alliances with foreign governments in-

stead of going to God for His deliverance. **Consumed us:** Their spiritual vibrance faded away. It withered as an autumn leaf.

64:8-12 Isaiah's plea is that as their Father, God not abandon them to the hands of their enemies. Since God is the potter (Jb 10:9), they must submit to His work of molding them. God had created them as a nation, and now the plea was that He preserve His creation. He would surely not destroy the work of His hands. **Exceedingly angry:** The prophet knew that if God's anger was unleashed, the nation would suffer total destruction. Isaiah is the mediator on behalf of the people. He sought for God's forgiveness on behalf of the nation. **House ... is burned up:** At the time the prophecy was written, the temple was standing. But as with other prophecies of Isaiah and the prophets, the prophet places himself in the time when the prophecy was fulfilled. In this case Isaiah places himself in the time of the captivity in order to plead in advance for the restoration of the nation and rebuilding of the temple. Though the people did not believe that God would allow them to fall to the Assyrians and Babylonians, the power of the prophecy was in the fact that the prophet said that Jerusalem would fall, but later be rebuilt. The Bible interpreter must always keep in mind that Isaiah and the other prophets were inspired prophets of God. Their prophecies of things to come were from God, regardless of the belief of their immediate audiences.

Chapter 65

BLESSING

OF THE FUTURE ISRAEL

65:1-7 *I am sought:* In the case of apostate Judah, God took the initiative to restore them to Him. In order to do this, He had to take them through the discipline of captivity. Before the captivities, and in their state of rebellion, they did not seek Him. However, He was always there. He had not left them in their darkest hour. The fact was that they had left Him. They searched for God, but they were searching in the wrong places (Compare Jn 5:39,40). ***Provoke Me to anger:*** Through their sin they provoked God to do what He had promised if they turned from Him. He was thus stirred to send them into captivity. They provoked Him by offering sacrifices to gods they had created after their own desires to follow after the lusts of the flesh and pride of life. ***Who sacrifice in gardens:*** Their gods were supposedly located in groves and gardens, places to which they went to offer sacrifices (1:29; 57:5; Ez 20:38). In such places they practiced all sorts of immoral sexual behavior. ***Remain among the graves:*** In seeking to communicate with the dead, they were in places where Jews were not to be. They did those things that were an abomination to the Lord. ***Lodge in monuments:*** This may have been locations to which they went to communicate with pagan gods. They involved themselves in various cults. ***Swine's flesh:*** See Lv 11:7. ***Keep to yourself:*** In their occult practices, they shunned one another. Some exalted themselves as holier than others

because they were supposedly more in touch with the spirit world. ***Smoke in My nose:*** Because of their apostasy from the true God, they were an irritating stench in the nose of God. ***I will not keep silence:*** It was not that they became irreligious. They invented religion that was disgusting to God. They turned their focus from the true worship of the true God to gods they had created after their own imagination. Thus God would not allow such to go on in the nation, for He was using the nation of Israel as the means through which He would bring the Messiah into the world. He thus had to repay them for their iniquity and purify them as a nation (Jr 16:18).

65:8-12 *I will bring forth a seed:* In order to accomplish His plan through Israel, God did not need to preserve the entire nation. He needed only a remnant in order to continue the seedline promise that was made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Therefore, God would preserve the good grapes from which to make new wine. ***From Judah:*** The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. ***Heir of My mountains:*** Palestine was mountainous, and thus there would be a restoration to the land in order that God carry on with His promise that He made to the fathers. God would work through the faithful few, but discard the rest. ***Fortune ... Destiny:*** They worship the false gods of fate and good luck. Those who give up on God, often create philosophies of life that relegate men to their own fate. The modern-day equivalent to these gods would be beliefs in horoscopes and astrology. ***Destine you to the sword:*** The

apostates were given over by God to destruction by the sword of the enemies of Judah.

65:13-16 God makes a declaration that the faithful would be spared, but the disloyal apostate would suffer calamity. **Name for a curse to My chosen:** The disloyal apostate will forever be a symbol of the judgment that God brings on the rebellious (See Nm 5:21; Jr 29:22; Zc 8:13). **Another name:** The faithful would be called by a new name, a name that identified their faithfulness to Him (Compare 62:2; At 11:26). **Blessed:** God blesses those who are a blessing for Him in this world.

65:17-25 *New heavens and a new earth:* God would purge out of His people those who were rebellious. The new Jerusalem would be made up of those who willingly gave themselves to the Lord, as opposed to those who were physically born into national Israel, but later went into apostasy (See comments Jr 31:31-34). The new Jerusalem, the church, would be composed of those who made a free-will choice to submit themselves to God. The church would also be preserved because it would always be made up of those who were submissive to God. As opposed to God's efforts to preserve a nation, the spiritual nation of God would be preserved through the faithfulness of those who want to serve God. Thus God would create in the church a new dwelling for His people. For the present church, He will create a new dwelling that is yet in the future into which the church will transition (Compare 2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1). **The former**

things: In the new environment for His people, the sin and sorrow of the past will be forgotten. Pestilence and war will be forgotten. One will be able to live out the fullness of his life. People will enjoy the fruits of their labors. They will not be afraid of invading armies who would plunder their crops and produce. They will be able to consume the products of their farms and live long years as do trees. **Bring forth for trouble:** They will not bring forth children to bear the sword or to be consumed by the sword. **Before they call I will answer:** The time between the prayer and the answer would be short. God will know their needs, and bring the answer into existence even while they were in prayer (See comments Mk 11:24). **Wolf and the lamb:** The nature of man would be different. In national Israel men digress into being aggressive toward one another. But in the new Jerusalem men would be known for their love of one another (Jn 13:34,35). **Serpent's food:** Those who would bite to devour, would become harmless. **My holy mountain:** It is no longer the plural (mountains), referring to the land of Palestine. Reference is the mountain of God's strength through the new Jerusalem (See comments 2:1-4). The strength of God's work on earth is manifested to man.

Chapter 66 SINCERE WORSHIP

66:1,2 *Throne ... footstool:* All that man can see that exists is under the control of God (See Hb 1:3). **Where is the house:** Though this statement is definite, men still seek to build sanctuaries

in which to house God (See comments 1 Kg 8:27; 2 Ch 6:18; At 17:22-29; see comments Jn 4:22-24). Those of the new Jerusalem will not seek to build houses in which they might house God. **Humble ... contrite spirit:** God works for those who fear Him. He works for those who humble themselves before Him (See comments Mt 5:1-12).

66:3,4 They have chosen: When men choose to worship God according to their own religious systems, they worship Him in vain (See comments Mk 7:1-9). Even if one performs religious rites according to the word of God, if the rites are performed with an insincere heart, then one is offering an abomination to God. God will allow one to worship Him in vain. He will allow one to deceive himself into thinking that what he is religiously doing is right before Him. However, in the end the vain worshiper will be judged for not following God's definition of worship with a sincere heart (See comments 2 Th 2:9-12). **I called:** They did not answer because they were caught up in their own religiosity that they had invented after their own desires. One is self-deceived when he performs his own religious rites, thinking that such is sanctioned by God (Hb 3:13).

66:5-6 Who cast you out for My name's sake: The tragedy of those who are self-deceived is that they persecute those who are actually doing the work of the Lord. Religious people crucified Jesus. The same will happen to those who stand against the religious doctrines and traditions of men (Jn 3:20; 7:7; 15:18,19). Isaiah was a revolutionary in

the time when the nation had already gone into a great apostasy. He preached a paradigm shift from apostasy to walking in the law of God. Eventually, he was rejected and killed by those to whom he was sent. The same happened to Jesus who came into the same situation (Mk 7:1-9). **Noise from the city:** For the righteous, the noise from God's presence was a time for joy. But for those who had created their religion by mixing what God required with the rituals of pagan gods, the sound from the temple was judgment. God would put to shame those who oppressed and persecuted those who stood for God's will. The thunderous noise came from the temple for it was there that they were syncretistic in their sacrifices, mixing pagan beliefs with sacrifices to God.

66:7-9 She gave birth to a boy: The birth of the church was without pain. In one day birth was given to the surprise of the world (See comments At 2). Nations are built through years of social struggle. But when God sent His Spirit, men and women responded in one day to the good news of Jesus. God had started the birth of the Messiah into the world when the gospel was first preached to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). For two thousand years He protected the seedline of Abraham in order to give birth to the Messiah, who in turn established the spiritual Israel of God in one day in A.D. 30.

66:10-14 See comments 2:1-4. **Rejoice with Jerusalem:** From Jerusalem the gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope was first preached (See comments At 2).

All Christians thus rejoice with Jerusalem, for from her went forth the gospel of Jesus. For Isaiah's immediate audience, there would come a time when the Jews would rejoice over Jerusalem because of the new thing that God would do in the city. **Gentiles:** Peoples from all nations would flow unto Jerusalem for the message of the gospel. She would be the mother's lap who would give comfort to her children by faith. God's hand would be upon those who are children of Abraham by faith. But His hand would be against those who were the enemies of God.

66:15-17 Plead with all flesh: Because God is not willing that any should perish, the message of the gospel goes unto all people. Those who do not respond have judged themselves for condemnation (Jn 12:48). Most people will not respond to the plea of God. These are those who continue to go to the gardens of idol worship and do abominable things.

66:18-21 I will gather all nations: This is the great commission from the prophetic lips of Isaiah (See comments Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). Those who come will see the glory of God through Jesus Christ (Jn 11:4,40,55). **Those who are delivered:** Those who are delivered from their sins will be sent throughout the world (At 8:4). They will go forth to declare the glory of God among the na-

tions. **Bring all you brethren for an offering:** See comments 2:1-4. **Priests:** See comments 1 Pt 5:2,9.

66:22-24 The new Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth, will continually worship before God (Rm 12:1,2). Worship will no longer be on the Sabbath, just one day a week. It will be daily, from Sabbath to Sabbath (See At 5:42; see comments Rm 12:1,2). Those who would be cast out are those who refuse to obey the gospel (Mk 9:48). These would judge themselves condemned because they rejected the word of Jesus (Jn 12:48). The figure of the condemnation of the wicked is taken from the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) where the bodies of 185,000 dead Assyrians were burned. This historical event established the literal and real upon which the Jews envisioned the hell to come. The end of the wicked will be eternal damnation (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9). But the end of those who are obedient to the gospel will be eternal life in the presence of God (Mt 25:46). Isaiah is concluded by a vision of the age on earth when the Son of Man would reign from heaven, which reign is taking place at this time. It began with the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God and will concluded when He comes again (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). The Jews were thus left a vision that encouraged hope for the future.