

# ISAIAH

## Volume III

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**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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**ISAIAH**

**Volume III**

by

**Paul T. Butler**

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**College Press, Joplin, Missouri**

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College Press

THIS VOLUME

IS

DEDICATED

TO

Sandra VanNortwick  
Charlene Martin Schell  
Becky Blodgett Holt  
Linda Thurman Rush  
Darlene Ashcraft  
Sherry Butler Lankford  
Elizabeth Weeks

my lovely secretaries

through whose outstanding efficiency and cooperation  
my writing ministry has been made possible

and

James R. Marcum

teaching assistant

whose aid has been

a great encouragement and contribution.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication-----	v
Seventeen Arguments That The Book of Isaiah Was Written By One Author -----	1
VII. Salvation Through God's Servant, Chapters 40 - 53 --	5
A. Purpose of the Lord's Servant, Chapters 40 - 43-----	5
1. Comfort, Chapter 40 -----	5
a. Prepare for The Coming of The Lord, 40:1-11 -----	5
b. Perceive The Nature of God, 40:12-26-----	13
c. Persevere In Waiting For The Lord, 40:27-31 -----	23
2. Conquest, Chapter 41 -----	26
a. Gentiles Silenced, 41:1-7-----	26
b. God's People Saved, 41:8-13-----	33
c. Glory to God, 41:14-20-----	37
d. Good Tidings, 41:21-29-----	41
3. Covenant, Chapter 42-----	45
a. See My Servant, 42:1-9-----	45
b. Sing a Song of Praise, 42:10-17 -----	51
c. Sightless Servants, 42:18-25-----	55
4. Call, Chapter 43-----	59
a. To Be A Possession, 43:1-7-----	59
b. To Be A Proclaimer, 43:8-13 -----	64
c. To Be A Prototype, 43:14-21 -----	68
d. To Be Perfected, 43:22-28-----	73
B. Power of The Lord's Servant, Chapters 44 - 49 ----	79
1. Sovereign Over All Gods, Chapter 44 -----	79
a. Shows Favor To The Faithful, 44:1-8 -----	79
b. Shows The Fraudulence of False Gods, 44:9-20-----	84
c. Shows The Frustration of Foolish Counsel, 44:21-28 -----	91
Special Study — The Transcendent God Revealed Himself -----	96
2. Sovereign in Salvation, Chapter 45 -----	106
a. Omnipotence, 45:1-8 -----	106

# I S A I A H

b. Obedience, 45:9-13 -----	112
c. Order, 45:14-19 -----	117
d. Outreach, 45:20-25 -----	123
Special Study — Typology -----	128
3. Sovereign Over Nations, Chapters 46 - 47 -----	139
a. Condemning Their Gods, 46:1-13 -----	139
b. Conquering Their Governments, 47:1-15 ----	145
4. Sovereign In Wisdom, Chapter 48 -----	155
a. Proof, 48:1-8 -----	155
b. Perspective, 48:9-16 -----	161
c. Practice, 48:17-22 -----	167
C. Program of The Lord's Servant, Chapters	
49 - 53 -----	175
1. Rescue, Chapter 49 -----	175
a. Despised Servant, 49:1-6 -----	175
b. Desirable Saviour, 49:7-13 -----	181
c. Dejected Zion, 49:14-21 -----	187
d. Delivered Society, 49:22-26 -----	192
Special Study — People of The Prophetic Promises -----	196
2. Teach, Chapter 50 -----	202
a. Objections Cancelled, 50:1-3 -----	202
b. Obedient Christ, 50:4-9 -----	205
c. Outcome Confirmed, 50:10-11 -----	210
3. Rule, Chapter 51 -----	212
a. Turn To Justice, 51:1-8 -----	212
b. Trust In Jehovah, 51:9-16 -----	218
c. Tormentors Judged, 51:17-23 -----	224
4. Evangelize, Chapter 52 -----	229
a. Redemption, 52:1-6 -----	229
b. Revelation, 52:7-12 -----	233
c. Regency, 52:13-15 -----	239
Special Study — The Word of God -----	243
5. Atone, Chapter 53 -----	255
a. Shunned, 53:1-3 -----	255
b. Suffers, 53:4-9 -----	260



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Healing Miracles of Christ -----	265
c. Succeeds, 53:10-12 -----	271
Special Study — The Righteousness of God as Manifested by The Prophets -----	282
VIII. Communion Through God's Covenant, Chapters 54 - 59 -----	289
A. Wed To The Lord In Covenant Relationship, Chapter 54 -----	289
1. Reconciled, 54:1-8 -----	289
2. Regaled, 54:9-17 -----	293
B. Word of The Lord Is Bond and Bounds of Covenant, Chapter 55 -----	299
1. Evidence, 55:1-5 -----	299
2. Extent, 55:6-13 -----	304
Special Study — The Wisdom of God -----	309
C. Worldwide Is The Invitation to Covenant Relationship, Chapter 56 -----	322
1. Distinctions Destroyed, 56:1-5 -----	322
2. Doers Are Disciples, 56:6-8 -----	326
3. Dumb Dogs Denounced, 56:9-12 -----	329
Special Study — What Is To Be Done Concerning False Teachers and Teaching -----	333
D. Weariness To Wicked Who Break Covenant With The Lord, Chapter 57 -----	337
1. Sorcery, 57:1-5 -----	337
2. Sensuality, 57:6-10 -----	342
3. Stupidity, 57:11-13 -----	346
4. Smiting, 57:14-19 -----	349
5. Seething, 57:20-21 -----	354
E. Wholeness To The Wise Who Keep Covenant With The Lord, Chapter 58 -----	358
1. Hearken, 58:1-5 -----	358
2. Holiness, 58:6-12 -----	362
3. Heritage, 58:13-14 -----	368

# I S A I A H

F. Wrath of The Lord Upon Covenant Despisers,	
Chapter 59-----	371
1. Their Crimes, 59:1-8-----	371
2. The Consequences, 59:9-15a-----	378
3. The Cure, 59:15b-21-----	382
IX. Zion — The Zenith, Chapters 60 - 66-----	390
A. Reward of Zion, Wealth of The Nations,	
Chapter 60-----	390
1. Glory, 60:1-7-----	390
2. Gain, 60:8-14-----	397
3. Goodness, 60:15-22-----	401
B. Rejoicing of Zion, Chapter 61-----	408
1. Freedom, 61:1-4-----	408
2. Fortune, 61:5-7-----	414
3. Fame, 61:8-11-----	419
Special Study — Liberty Is Not License-----	424
C. Regeneration of Zion, Chapter 62-----	431
1. New Name, 62:1-5-----	431
2. New Nourishment, 62:6-9-----	435
3. New Nature, 62:10-12-----	437
D. Restlessness of Zion, Chapters 63-64-----	440
1. Predicted Vindication, 63:1-9-----	440
2. Prayer for Victory, 63:10-14-----	448
3. Petition of Victims, 63:15-19-----	454
Special Study — The Holy Spirit In Old Testament	
Times-----	458
4. Penitently Vexed, 64:1-7-----	462
5. Plea for Verification, 64:8-12-----	467
E. Refining of Zion, Chapter 65-----	471
1. Cleansed, 65:1-12-----	471
2. Characterized, 65:13-16-----	480
3. Created, 65:17-25-----	485
F. Epilogue, Chapter 66-----	491
1. Burial of Old Zion, 66:1-6-----	491
2. Birth of New Zion, 66:7-14-----	498
3. Building of Zion, 66:15-24-----	504
Bibliography-----	516

## SEVENTEEN ARGUMENTS THAT THE BOOK OF ISAIAH WAS WRITTEN BY ONE AUTHOR

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is the author of the entire prophecy, because:

1. N.T. quotations leave no room for doubt that in the eyes of the N.T. writers Isaiah was the author of the entire prophecy.
2. Traditions, as early as Ecclesiasticus, attribute one authorship for Isaiah.
3. The heading of the prophecy (1:1) is intended to stand for the entire book.
4. The author of Isaiah 40-66 was a Palestinian—not showing familiarity with the land or the religion of Babylon such as we might expect from one of the exiles.
5. There are historical passages in chapters 40-66 which do not fit the time of the exile.
6. Once “higher critics” begin separating or dividing Isaiah, it is impossible to rest with two or even three large divisions, which ends in absurdity.
7. Passages in Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah and Zechariah seem to indicate that the latter portion of Isaiah (40-66) was in existence when these prophets wrote.

Isaiah	Jeremiah
44:12-15	10:1-16
46:7	10:1-16
48:6	33:3
53	11:19
56:11	6:15
56:9—57:11a	6:15
65:17	3:16
66:15	4:13

- Cf. also Isa. 47:8-10 with Zeph. 2:15; and Isa. 17:1, 7; 66:20 with Zeph. 3:10.
8. After nearly 200 years of intense research by negative critics, scholarship has not been able to present a satisfactory account of the authorship of Second Isaiah (40-66).

# I S A I A H

9. No two critics agree on the identity of the author of Deutero-Isaiah (even assuming that there is such an author).
10. Even critics make many admissions to valuelessness of style as a vehicle of evidence for two Isaiahs.
11. Critics cannot account adequately for ancient tradition which says Isaiah is the author.
12. The Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls gives only positive evidence for one authorship of Isaiah (these scrolls date somewhere between 100-200 B.C.).
13.                    Claims for Isaiah's authorship of the entire book from N.T. quotations

Isaiah	Quoted	Attributed by critics to:
40:3	Mt. 3:3	II
53:4	Mt. 8:17	II, III
42:1	Mt. 12:17	II
6:9-10	Mt. 13:14	I
29:13	Mt. 15:7	I
40:13	Mk. 1:2	II
29:13	Mk. 7:6	I
40:3-5	Lk. 3:4	II
61:1-2	Lk. 4:17	III
40:3	Jn. 1:23	II
53:1	Jn. 12:38	II, III
6:9-10	Jn. 12:39	I
53:1; 6:9-10	Jn. 12:41	I, II
53:7-8	Acts 8:28	II, III
53:7-8	Acts 8:32	II, III
53:7-8	Acts 8:30	II, III
6:9-10	Acts 28:25	I
10:22, 23; 11:5	Rom. 9:27	I
1:9	Rom. 9:29	I
53:1	Rom. 10:16	II, III
65:1	Rom. 10:20	III

That the writers of the New Testament claimed Isaiah to

be the author of the entire book is the strongest of all arguments that Isaiah was indeed the only author of the book.

14. *Circle of ideas*—strikingly the same throughout the entire book; e.g., the characteristic name for God, “the Holy One of Israel,” (25 times in Isaiah and only six in rest of O.T.).

Another idea unique with the whole book is “a highway.” (cf. Isa. 11:16; 35:8; 40:3; 43:19; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10).

Another characteristic is the idea of “a remnant.” (cf. Isa. 1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11-16; 14:22-30; 15:9; 16:14; 17:3; 21:17; 28:5; 37:31; 46:3; 65:8-9).

Another characteristic idea is that of “Zion.” (cf. Isa. 2:3; 4:5; 18:7; 24:23; 28:16; 29:8; 30:19; 31:9; 33:5-20; 34:8; 46:13; 49:14; 51:3-16; 52:1; 59:20; 60:14; 62:1-11; 66:8).

Another oft-repeated expression is, “pangs of a woman in travail.” (cf. Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17-18; 42:14; 54:1; 66:7).

These, and many other characteristics . . . stamp the book with an individuality which it is difficult to account for, if it be broken up into countless fragments and distributed, as some do, over the centuries.

15. *The literary style*: Although literary style is not a sure criterion of authorship, yet it is certainly remarkable that the clause “for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it” should be found three times in the Book of Isaiah, and nowhere else in the entire O.T. (cf. 1:20; 40:5; 58:14).

The phrase, “streams of water,” occurs twice in Isa. and nowhere else (cf. 30:25; 44:4 in the Hebrew).

Another literary peculiarity is the prophet’s tendency to reduplication (cf. 2:7-8; 6:3; 8:9; 24:16-23; 40:1; 43:11-25; 48:15; 51:12; 57:19; 62:10).

Isaiah’s style differs widely from that of every other O.T. prophet, and is as far removed as possible from that of Ezekiel and the post-exilic prophets.

16. *Historical references*: The prophet’s constant reference to

Judah and Jerusalem, his country and its capital (1:7-9; 3:8; 24:19; 25:2; 40:2-9; 62:4). His reference to the temple and its ritual of worship and sacrifice. When there was prosperity and the people were profuse and formal in their ceremonies, the prophet brings God's complaint, 1:11-15; when the country had been devastated by Sennacherib and the Assyrian hosts, the prophet reminds them that they had not brought to Jehovah the sheep of their burnt offerings, 43:23-24, nor honored Him with their sacrifices; while in 66:1-3, 6:20, the temple and its services are certainly presupposed to be in existence (which was not the case in post-exilic times until rebuilt).

Isaiah's attitude throughout the book toward the captivities is that of both anticipation and realization (in 57:1 judgment is only threatened, not yet inflicted). While in the first part of the book (3:8) the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is described as in the past.

17. *Predictive Element*: This is the strongest proof of the unity of the book.
  - a. Predicted the breaking to pieces of Ephraim (7:8)
  - b. Carrying away of spoils of Damascus and Samaria (8:4; 7:16)
  - c. That Tyre would be forgotten 70 years (23:15-18)
  - d. That suddenly Jerusalem's foes should be as dust (29:5)
  - e. That Assyria should be dismayed and fall by the sword (30:17-31; 31:8).
  - f. Reminded the people after the siege by Sennacherib that he had predicted it (41:21-23, 26).
  - g. Cf. also, 42:9-23; 43:9-12; 44:7-28; 45:3-13; 46:10-11; 48:3-5; 48:6-16.

VII. SALVATION THROUGH GOD'S SERVANT  
CHAPTERS 40 - 53

A. PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SERVANT  
CHAPTERS 40 - 43

1. COMFORT, CHAPTER 40

a. PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD

TEXT: 40:1-11

- 1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
- 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.
- 3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God.
- 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain:
- 5 and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 6 The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:
- 7 the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.
- 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.
- 9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!
- 10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.
- 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the

lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is to do the comforting in verses 1 - 27?
- b. Why cry, "All flesh is grass"?
- c. When is God going to feed his flock like a shepherd?

### PARAPHRASE

Encourage and strengthen my people says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call out to her that her warfare and her struggle is fulfilled—it is over; her iniquity is paid for; God's wrath is abundantly satisfied. Hark, a voice crying! In the wilderness prepare a way for Jehovah; make smooth and level in the desert a highway for our God. Every dark valley will have to be filled in and raised up and every mountain and hill scraped off and lowered. Everything that is uneven must be made level, and the rough places must be smoothed out like a plain. When the way is prepared then the glory of the Lord will be made manifest and all the human race will have His glory shown to them together. The Lord has promised this and it shall certainly come to pass. Hark, a second voice saying, Cry! And I said, What shall I cry? Cry out that all the human race is frail like grass and the flowers of the field. When the breath of God blows upon the grass in the hot, dry winds of summer, the grass withers and the flowers fade. That is just how fragile man is. He and grass and flowers wither and fade, but the word of our God stands forever.

O Zion, bringer of good news, get yourself up on a high mountain where you can really cry the good news to Jerusalem, as a bringer of good news and shout with a strong voice. Do not be afraid to cry loudly to all the cities of Judah, Behold, your God! Behold indeed! For the Lord Jehovah is coming like



a strong and powerful ruler and His arm will rule for Him. He is bringing His rewards and compensations with Him for His people. He is going to provide food for His people like a shepherd; He is going to provide safety and protection for His people like a shepherd; He is going to show compassion and gentleness to all those who need help.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-2 **STRENGTHEN:** There is definitely a division of Isaiah's book at chapter 40. This, however, does not mean the book has two different authors any more than there were two different authors for the Pentateuch (first five books of the O.T.). Moses, author of the Pentateuch, had different purposes in mind for his books and so used a different style. Isaiah has a different purpose in mind for the last half of his book and so uses a different style. For evidence of one authorship of Isaiah see Special Study, "Seventeen Arguments That The Book of Isaiah Was Written By One Author," pages 1-4. Isaiah's main purpose in chapters 1-39 was to preach against the sin of Israel and predict judgment. His main purpose in chapters 40-66 is to preach of peace and predict the nature of the future Israel of God, the Church. Edward J. Young calls chapters 40-66, "The Salvation and Future Blessing of The True Israel of God." These latter chapters are intensely Messianic! Isaiah 40:3-4; 40:6-8; 53:1-12; 55:1-3; 61:1-2 are specifically fulfilled in the New Testament. We have emphasized the Messianic nature of chapters 40-66 in our outline (see also the chart, Vol. I, pgs. 64-65).

These first two verses of chapter 40 form a prologue for the rest of the entire book. Some have outlined chapters 40-66 in a threefold division to correspond to the prologue thusly:

1. 40:1—48:22 — "her warfare is ended."
2. 49:1—57:21 — "her iniquity is pardoned."
3. 58:1—66:24 — "she hath received . . . double for all her sins."

*Nakhamu* is the Hebrew word translated *comfort*. It is also translated *repent* in many places in the O.T. The authors of the Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament) used the Greek word *parakaleo* which is the word Paraclete or Comforter comes from in John's Gospel. In Greek it means "one called alongside to help, aid or strengthen." The command in verse one is for someone to "strengthen, help or aid" God's people.

Who is to do this "strengthening"? It is all the prophets from Isaiah to the Messiah. It is probably correct to say that the initial comforting was for the Israel of Isaiah's day or the Israel of the captivities (although the captivity in Babylon has not yet occurred). However, the ultimate target is the Messianic Israel. The fulfillment is for the days of John the Baptist and the Messiah. The true Israel's warfare was not ended and her iniquity pardoned until accomplished in Christ (cf. Lk. 1:67-79) and John the Baptist was born especially to announce this. In 40:1-11 there are two texts specifically quoted in the New Testament as finding their fulfillment there (40:3-4 and 40:6-8). The prophets from Isaiah to Malachi must strengthen Israel that those who believe may prepare a remnant through which the Incarnate Son may come and establish His kingdom. John the Baptist was the one who was "more than a prophet" (Mt. 11:9), the one whose crying in the wilderness signaled the fulfillment of "the law and the prophets" (Mt. 11:13). The Messiah-Servant was the one to whom this prophecy pointed. (See Isa. 49:13.)

The Hebrew phrase *dabberu 'al—lev* translated "speak ye comfortably" or "speak tenderly" means literally, "speak upon the heart." It is a phrase meaning to "win someone over" in Gen. 34:3 and Judges 19:3. In Gen. 50:21 Joseph "spoke upon the heart" of his brothers to build their confidence in his kind intentions toward them. This is the manner in which the strengthening is to be done. The comforting is not something to be done superficially—it is to be lodged in the heart of the people.

What is to be planted on Jerusalem's heart is that her warfare

is ended, her iniquity is pardoned and she has received double from Jehovah for all her sins. This cannot have the return from the Babylonian captivity for its essential goal for the nation of Israel enjoyed only a brief respite from conflict and struggle after their restoration. Daniel predicts 490 years of "trouble" to follow the restoration from captivity in minute detail (see our commentary on *Daniel*, College Press). Daniel also predicts that Israel's iniquity will not be pardoned until the end of those 490 years (Dan. 9:24-27 in our commentary). So, the comforting or strengthening of Jerusalem is predicted on the promise of cessation of warfare and pardoning of iniquity in the great Messianic era of the future. That era will be announced by "The Voice" who was none other than John the Baptist. Jerusalem "received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." This may mean either her punishment was abundant or her blessing was abundant. In either case, once again, it can find its ultimate fulfillment only in the Messiah (cf. Isa. 53:1-2 for abundant punishment and Isa. 61:1-11 for abundant blessing—both in the Messiah).

v. 3-8 STRAIGHTEN: The Hebrew construction is interesting. Literally it is *qol qorea*, "voice, one crying." The first three gospel writers all confirm this found its fulfillment in John the Baptist (Mt. 3:3; Mk. 1:2-3; Lk. 3:4-6).

Certainly, all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi were commissioned by this command to "prepare" the way for the coming of the Lord. Unquestionably, a faithful remnant needed to be continually "prepared" so that new generations of a messianic nucleus might be preserved through the centuries from Isaiah to Christ. But it was John the Baptist who had the climactic job of preparing an *immediate* nucleus for the coming of God in the flesh—Jesus Christ. It was John the Baptist who first immersed men and women in water for repentance unto the remission of sins (Mt. 3:1-2; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:1-3). It was the Immerser who pointed some of his principal disciples to Jesus (Jn. 1:29-51) and these men became apostles—evangelists and missionaries of the Messianic kingdom, the church. Indeed, even the Lord Himself said of John the Immerser,

“... among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist,” (Mt. 11:11).

The Hebrew word *ba'aerabah* means “in the desert.” It is the same word from which we have *Arabia*. The people are in the “wilderness” and God is going to come to them. They must prepare Him a way. The “desert” or “wilderness” was not necessarily an endless, flat sea of sand as we think of a desert today. A wilderness or desert could be any type of terrain which was uninhabited by people. The river banks of the Jordan, cluttered with reeds, brush and rocks was a wilderness. The barren mountains of southern Judea were a wilderness (“desert”). These wildernesses with their brush, mountains, valleys, rocks, and wild animals presented formidable obstacles to travel in ancient times. When kings and potentates wished to journey and it involved traversing such an unlikely territory, they sent great companies of slaves and workers on ahead of them to fill in valleys and lower hills and generally prepare a safe and easy pathway for them to travel. The desert is a figure of the obstacles and impediments that have kept God from His people. It was their sinful rebellion (Isa. 59:1-3) as depicted in the first 39 chapters that was keeping God from His people. This rebellious attitude in the majority will intensify in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel until God leaves them (Ezek. 10:18; 11:23). God wants to come to them in Person—Incarnate—in the flesh. He wants to reveal His glory to all mankind (v. 5). And when they have a remnant fully prepared—when some believe Him enough to remove all obstacles into their hearts—when some are willing to obey Him completely (like Mary, mother of Jesus), then He will come! Isaiah is emphatically the missionary book of the Old Testament. He begins his prophecy (2:2-3) by stating that “all the nations” shall flow to Zion. He ends it by stating that “all flesh” shall come to worship before the Lord (66:23). One has only to take a concordance and look for “peoples” and “nations” in Isaiah to observe how often the prophet predicts that people from all nations will eventually become citizens of the Messianic kingdom of God.

A Voice is saying, Cry out. The Voice of verse six is evidently the Lord calling upon His messengers to add more exhortation to the message of "strengthening." First, there is the exhortation to "prepare a way" for the Lord to come. The N.T. applies this to John the Baptist as the one who would prepare the hearts of people to receive the Messiah (Lk. 1:16-17). Further preparation to receive God is proclaiming the message that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field": and the N.T. applies this to man's inability to save himself, the redemption that is in Christ, and man's access to that redemption through obedience to the gospel (I Pet. 1:13-24). Now the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi were charged to preach man's frailty and his inability to save himself, and the redemption of God provided by grace in some future era. And all their contemporaries who believed this and trusted in Jehovah were straightened out in their view of man and God. But only the substitutionary death of Christ and His resurrection (the gospel) validated once and for all man's lostness and God's faithfulness. Only the gospel straightens man out so God can come to him. Only the gospel demonstrated ultimately that the word of God shall stand forever. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the entire "strengthening" half of Isaiah's prophecy (ch. 40-66)!

v. 9-11 SURRENDER: The construction of the Hebrew in verse nine does not necessitate the "tidings" to be told "to" Zion. Literally translated the verse would read, "So, a mountain high go you to, you bringer of good tidings, Zion." We have indicated this in our paraphrase. In other words, Zion is the bringer of good tidings—not the one to whom good tidings are brought. Zion and Jerusalem are personified as proclaimers of good news. Isaiah predicted earlier that the law and the word of the Lord would "go forth" out of Zion and Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). The good tidings are to be proclaimed *koakh*, powerfully, and, *tiyraaiy*, fearlessly.

What is Zion to proclaim? Behold! God is coming in mightiness! *Adonai-Yaweh*, the Lord-Jehovah is coming. *Zeroau*, arm, usually symbolizes a characteristic—power. It may also

symbolize the Messiah who came as God's "Arm" to rule (cf. Isa. 51:4-5; 52:7-10; 53:1; Luke 1:51). Isaiah 52:7-10 also predicts the "good tidings" by which the covenant people are to be "comforted" involving the Lord "baring His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations." It is apparent that "arm" here and in 52:7-10 refers to the Messiah.

There could hardly be a better climax to this great Messianic prologue of the "comfort" section in Isaiah's book than verse 11. The "shepherd" can be none other than Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. The Messiah-shepherd is one of the greatest concepts of Old Testament prophecy (cf. Ezek. 34:20-34; Micah 5:1-4; Zech. 11:7-14; 13:7, etc.). Jesus called Himself, The Good Shepherd (Lk. 15:3-7; Jn. 10:1-30) and His audience as a "flock" that needed shepherding (Mt. 9:36-38; Jn. 10:1-30).

If Isaiah and those prophets who come after him are to prepare mankind for the coming of the Lord, they must get men to prepare their wicked, desert-like hearts like a smooth, straight highway; they must straighten out their evaluation of man's ability to save himself and decide that man is capable of abiding forever only if he abides in the eternal word of God; they must surrender to the good tidings that God is going to send His "Arm"—the tender, Good Shepherd—to rule for Him.

Isaiah was writing of the glorious future for the benefit of the people of his day. Isaiah's task was to preserve a remnant of faithful Israelites who would be able to endure the disintegration of their nation, go into captivity and return to carry on the Messianic destiny. This remnant was to pass on their faith in the prophetic promises that this destiny would be preserved by God and ultimately fulfilled—if not in their lives, in some glorious era to come. There may be an initial reference in this prologue to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine in the days of Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah.

But, unquestionably, the ultimate focus of the great redemption promised here—the coming of God to His people who are prepared—is to the Messiah and His kingdom—the

church. We have inspired documentation in the New Testament that this is so!

### QUIZ

1. Give as many arguments as you can that Isaiah is the author of the entire book by his name.
2. What does the word "comfort" mean?
3. Why cannot the ending of warfare, etc., be applied to the Israel returned from Babylonian captivity?
4. Who is the "voice" that was to cry, "Prepare"?
5. What does the figure of speech, "make level in the desert a highway" refer to?
6. How much emphasis does Isaiah place on a missionary task?
7. What do men need to straighten out about "all flesh"?
8. What message is Zion to proclaim as good tidings?
9. What proof do we have that these eleven verses are Messianic?

### b. PERCEIVE THE NATURE OF THE LORD

TEXT: 40:12-26

- 12 Who hath measured the water in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?
- 13 Who hath directed the Spirit of Jehovah, or being his counsellor hath taught him?
- 14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?
- 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.
- 16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof

sufficient for a burnt-offering.

- 17 All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing, and vanity.
- 18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?
- 19 The image, a workman hath cast it, and the goldsmith overlayeth it with gold, and casteth for it silver chains.
- 20 He that is too impoverished for such an oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a skilful workman to set up a graven image, that shall not be moved.
- 21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?
- 22 It is he that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out of the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in;
- 23 that bringeth princes to nothing; that maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.
- 24 Yea, they have not been planted; yea, they have not been sown; yea, their stock hath not taken root in the earth: moreover he bloweth upon them, and they wither, and the whirlwind taketh them away as stubble.
- 25 To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One.
- 26 Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking.

## QUERIES

- a. What is meant by the mountains being "weighed"?
- b. What is the "circle of the earth"?
- c. What does God call "by name"?



## PARAPHRASE

Who else has measured all the oceans, lakes and rivers in the infinite palm of His hand and measured off the heavens with His yardstick? Who else is able to measure the land of the earth in its proper one-third portion? Who else is able to weigh accurately the mountains and hills in the proportion needed upon the earth? Who regulated the Spirit of the Lord with rules or directions according to which all this was to be done? With whom did He consult? Who instructed Him how to create all this and who taught Him what to do with it? Who gave Him this omniscient understanding? Indeed, the great masses of people over whom the Lord rules are no more burden to Him than a drop in a bucket is a burden to the man who carries it and no more than a tiny speck of dust would tip the balance of a scale. Indeed, the islands and continents may be carried by Him as if they were an infinitesimal atom. All the wood of Lebanon's forests is not enough to provide a sacrificial fire, nor all Lebanon's animals enough to provide a sacrifice sufficient to His majesty. Compared to His greatness, the masses of humanity and the power of man's empires are as nothing—as if they did not even exist.

To whom then will you compare God? Who or what resembles Him? Will you be so foolish as to liken God to one of your man-made images? These are made by men, in the likeness of man, from earthen metals and with man-made ornamentations. Even your poor people, who cannot afford gold and silver, will not be outdone in foolishness. They select a tree they think will not rot and hire skilled artisans to carve them an idol they think will be permanent. Why do you continually refuse to acknowledge who the real God is? Why do you continually refuse to listen to His prophets tell you who the real God is? It is not because you have not had the truth about God preached to you, is it? It is not because you have not been able to understand what His creative works say about Him, is it? What you have heard and what you have seen should have taught you that it is Jehovah who is enthroned upon the zenith of the earth

and upholds His creation by His almighty power. Men and their idols are as weak and powerless as grasshoppers when compared to Him. He stretches out the heavens as easily as man would a curtain and makes a tent of all the heavens for His own dwelling place. He is the One who deposes princely rulers from their thrones, and brings down high and mighty human judges to nothingness. In fact, many of these pretended potentates scarcely come to power before Jehovah sees fit to remove them. Rulers are one moment upon the throne; the next they are gone like stubble in a whirlwind.

So, there is no one to whom you may compare Me, is there? There is nothing that is equal to Me, is there? Look up into the heavens! Understand that Jehovah is Creator of all the universe. He brought every single star into being and knows exactly how many stars there are. He has named every one of them and calls the roll like a military commander. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

## COMMENTS

v. 12-17 SOVEREIGN CREATOR: If God's covenant people are to be strengthened (comforted) in order to fulfill their messianic destiny they must prepare themselves to receive God's coming to them in the flesh. This is announced in 40:1-11. But they are not prepared. They have made for themselves gods of wood and metal. They do not know the God who speaks to them through the prophets because they have rejected His word for that of the "mediums and the wizards" (Isa. 8:19). They *think* they know him. But they have compared Him to their idols and pronounced Him impotent, unable to carry out His promises (cf. Isa. 5:18-20; 29:15-16; 48:1-5; Jer. 17:15, etc.). In fact, Isaiah's contemporaries have already told him *they do not want to know* the Holy One of Israel! (Isa. 30:9-11).

It is interesting that Isaiah, attempting to prepare the people for the messianic destiny, does not spend his time in elaborate

plans for organization, entertainment, chicken-dinners, welfare programs, singing, or emotion-packed stories. He preached a logical, reasonable sermon on the nature and character of God. Mankind is not going to be saved by human programs but by *perceiving* the Person of God (see Special Study, "The Faith Once Delivered For All Time," *Isaiah, Vol. II*, pg. 250-257, College Press).

Who is the God whose coming the prophet has predicted? He is the Sovereign Creator. He has created the earth and its physical features in perfect proportion necessary to maintain the intricate balance of life. The fundamental principle of geophysics known as *isostasy* ("equal weights") is announced in verse 12. The waters of the earth's surface, the land-mass and the atmosphere were created with the preciseness necessary to cause the proper gravitational and hydrological functions to sustain life on this planet. The Hebrew word *shalish* is translated *measure* referring to "the dust of the earth . . ." and means literally *a third*. The surface of the earth consists of land and water. Land, the solid part, covers about 57,584,000 square miles, or about three tenths ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the earth's surface! Amazing! How did Isaiah know that "the dust of the earth" was *a third* 2700 years ago? The only accounting for it is that it was divinely revealed to him!

The God who is coming is not only omnipotent, He is omniscient. The verb translated *directed* in verse 13 is the Hebrew *tikken* and may also be translated *measured*. He who has measured the creation cannot be measured by the creation. He is unmeasurable and unsearchable (cf. Job 5:9; Psalms 145:3; Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33).

Creation required infinite, supernatural knowledge. Look wherever he will—into the vastness of outer space or into the minuteness of biological space or into the labyrinthine space of human personality—man reaches limits to his knowledge. But God knows. This was demonstrated once for all in Jesus Christ who calmed the seas, raised the dead, cast out demons, read the minds of His disciples and enemies, and predicted the future behavior of men and women. God knows—but no

one taught God this knowledge, for no creature possesses such knowledge.

How did Isaiah come to such a lofty concept of God? Not by human speculation. One has only to read ancient literature of the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Romans to understand that the great thinkers of history never reached such sublime heights as these in their speculations about origins and gods. Isaiah's knowledge of God came by revelation (Isa. 64:4; I Cor. 2:1-13).

Not only is Jehovah infinitely supreme to individuals, He is sovereign to and independent of nations. Powerful world empires consolidate human wisdom, human power and natural resources, and seem to be able to exercise and execute the will of man in opposition to the will of God. World empires appear at times to have the power to usurp the sovereignty of God upon the earth. But compared to the power and wisdom of God they are as infinitesimal as a "drop in a bucket." It is not that God has no concern for the nations. The Bible is His love letter to the world. But as far as their opposition to the fulfilling of His purposes, it is "less than nothing—vanity." His Being and His Sovereignty is not dependent upon them. They do not create Him—He creates them. He does not need them. If all creation were a temple, Lebanon an altar, its lordly woods the fire-wood, and its countless beasts the sacrifice, it would not be an offering sufficient to make Jehovah dependent upon man. If God were hungry He would not need to depend upon man (Psa. 50:3-15). If He needed a house He would not need to depend upon man (Isa. 66:1-2).

Perhaps Christians today need this sermon of Isaiah! Perhaps we sometimes flirt with the same arrogance of the Jews of Isaiah's day—that God could not do without us! God is not dependent upon our goodness, our offerings, our wisdom, our buildings. It is we who need His goodness. We need to make offerings to Him. The Jews were not ready for God to come to them until they perceived this. No man is ready to receive God, His Son or His Spirit, until he perceives the same thing.

v. 18-20 **STUPID CREATURES:** Since God is infinitely powerful,

infinitely wise and unsearchable, it is sheer stupidity for the creature to attempt, in his finite limitations, to carve a likeness in wood or stone and think he has reproduced the totality of God. It is also sheer stupidity for men to devise political, ethical and philosophical systems and assume they have reproduced the totality of God. Man is limited to the experienced. God is beyond the experienced. The only possibility of man reaching beyond the experienced is that the Unexperienceable One shall reveal Himself in man's experience. This He did in Jesus Christ. God can create man in His image—but man cannot create God in his image. Edward J. Young says it succinctly, "Isaiah's question (v. 18) brings us to the heart of genuine theism. There can be no comparison between the living, eternal God ('el) and any man, for man is but a creature. Man is limited, finite, temporal; God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all His attributes and perfections. In our thinking about God the infinite distance between God and the creature must ever be kept in mind. To break down this distinction is to fall into the sin of idolatry."

The Hebrew word *pesel* is translated *image* or *graven image* and is the thing Israel was forbidden to have in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:4). Moses was warned that God cannot be represented by any "form" (Deut. 4:12-24). Men seem to have an insatiable desire to "see" some "form" of God (Jn. 14:8-11), yet no one has ever "seen" Him (Jn. 1:18; 6:46; Col. 1:15; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Mt. 11:27; I Jn. 4:20). Christians are to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29; II Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10), but this does not mean the flesh and blood body of Jesus (cf. I Cor. 15:49-50). It is therefore a dangerous practice to make statues and pictures of Jesus and depend upon them for our concept of the Son of God (besides the fact no one actually knows today the precise physical features of Jesus). It is the thinking and acting of Jesus we are to adore and recreate in us—not His human body. Perhaps this is why God saw fit to obliterate from history any exact description of Jesus. Perhaps this is why God has seen fit to erase any precise location of Jesus' birth, home, etc., lest men be more tempted than they

are to worship things and places rather than the Person.

The silliness of attempting to fashion a Creator out of that which is created is best exemplified by Isaiah 44:9-20. There the idol-maker cuts down a tree and with half he builds a fire and cooks his food and with the other half he makes himself a god. How ridiculous! It is a fundamental principle of life that men take on the character of that which they worship (Psa. 115:3-8; Hosea 9:10; Rom. 1:18-32). Idolatry produces stupidity, degradation and death. Carving images of men and animals from wood and stone to adore and worship is not the only form of idolatry. Disobedience and rebellion against God's commands (I Sam. 15:23) and covetousness (Col. 3:5) are both forms of idolatry.

Even the poor people of Isaiah's day refused to be deprived of indulging in idolatry. They could not afford gold and silver so they had a craftsman carve them an idol from hard wood. Making of idols was taken seriously by those who worshipped them. Only the best craftsmen fashioned them lest the production be an unworthy representation of the god or goddess. They must be made substantially of enduring materials. The larger they were and the longer lasting, the more prestige and power the idols supposedly retained.

v. 21-26 SENSIBLE CONSIDERATION: There are two sources from which these stupid people should have perceived the sovereignty of Jehovah and prepared for His coming—the *word* of God and the *world* of God. Isaiah's questions are rhetorical. Only one answer is possible—yes! Over and over, through His spokesmen (the patriarchs and the prophets), the existence and nature of the Creator was proclaimed to Israel. Day by day Israel could see the Creator in nature and providence. Have they heard? have they known? Yes! There is no excuse for their stupidity. They could not plead ignorance as the cause for their idolatry. Their sin is deliberate and in spite of their knowledge (see Special Study, "Unbelief is Deliberate," *Isaiah Vol. II*, pg. 99, College Press).

The prophet implores his people to come back to a sensible consideration of the sovereignty of Jehovah based on more

evidence from creation and history. One thing is certain from man's experience—man is not supernatural and omnipotent. Compared to the eternal, sovereign Jehovah, who sits enthroned upon the "circle" (zenith) of the earth, men are like grasshoppers. Get all the millions and millions of grasshoppers together and they cannot hold the world in its course. All the men of the world are like that. Some interpreters see in the word *hkoog* ("circle") an indication that ancient people knew the world was round. Others think it merely means the highest part of the horizon or the zenith. God is pictured as sitting over the highest part of the earth to watch over His creation. The emphasis of the context is on comparing the power of God and the weakness of man. God also stretched out the heavens as effortlessly and quickly as a man in Isaiah's day would stretch out a curtain. These vast, endless, majestic heavens are His dwelling place. Light travels at approximately 186,000 miles per second. The estimated distance to the extent of the *known* universe is 6,000,000 light years! Multiply the number of seconds in a year by six million and you get the estimate of the *known* universe. But there are areas beyond that!

Proud, haughty, presumptuous human potentates and rulers strut through history pretending they rule the earth. But it is Jehovah who gives and takes away (cf. Dan. 2:20-23; Jer. 27:5-11; Isa. 45:1-7). God plants and sows and lets them take root only as long as He wishes. Some men scarcely are sown and hardly take root before He takes them away like the whirlwind takes chaff away. All flesh is like grass (I Pet. 1:24-25). Our years are "soon gone and we fly away" (cf. Psa. 90:9-10; Mt. 6:27; Jas. 4:13-17), but God is forever.

The prophet repeats his challenge. There is no being to whom one may liken Jehovah. No one in all His creation is His equal. He is the Incomparable One. He has created the stars and planets. He knows how many there are and has a name for each of them. Man cannot even count the stars, let alone create one. Someone has pointed out that while God formed other animals to look downwards for pasture and prey, he made man alone erect, and told him to look at what may be

regarded as his own habitation, the starry heavens. When man seriously contemplates the heavens he is pointed to the Creator (Psa. 19:1-6). Charles A. Lindbergh was 25 years old when he took off from Roosevelt Field, New York, at 7:52 a.m. on May 20, 1927. After more than 3600 miles and 33½ hours, he landed at LeBourget Field near Paris, France. When he had flown his trusted plane, "Spirit of St. Louis," midway on its transatlantic flight he began to think of the smallness of man and the deficiency of his devices, and the greatness and marvels of God's universe. He mused, "It's hard to be an agnostic here in the 'Spirit of St. Louis' when so aware of the frailty of man's devices. If one dies, all God's creation goes on existing in a plan so perfectly balanced, so wondrously simple and yet so incredibly complex that it is beyond our comprehension. There's the infinite detail, and man's consciousness of it all—a world audience to what, if not to God."

## QUIZ

1. Why must Isaiah's people know about the nature of God?
2. How does Isaiah proceed to bring the people to this knowledge?
3. What is interesting about Isaiah's statement about the dust of the earth having been measured by God?
4. How did Isaiah come to such a lofty concept of God?
5. What can Christians learn from this emphasis on the nature of God?
6. Why is making graven images stupid?
7. What other forms of idolatry are there?
8. Why should the contemplation of the heavens point man to God?



## c. PERSEVERE IN WAITING FOR THE LORD

TEXT: 40:27-31

- 27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God?
- 28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding.
- 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength.
- 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
- 31 but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

## QUERIES

- a. Why did Israel have such an attitude toward Jehovah?
- b. When would Jerusalem come to "renew their strength"?

## PARAPHRASE

O Jacob, O Israel, how can you say, The difficult way I must travel is hidden from Jehovah, and God does not notice my trouble and take up my cause and defend my rights? You certainly have had plenty of opportunity to know this is not true of Jehovah, haven't you? You have certainly heard the truth about Jehovah, haven't you? Jehovah is the God of eternity. He was before creation and He is the Creator. He is eternal in all His attributes and eternally powerful and strong and vigilant. He never tires or grows weary. Finite men will not

understand this eternality because it is impossible for men to fully comprehend the infinite. There is abundant evidence of God's eternal power so men may believe even if they cannot understand it. Jehovah is the One who gives power and strength to everyone else! All men eventually grow weak and exhaust their strength, even the young, virile athletic-type men tire and grow weary. But those who believe in Jehovah will be given fresh strength, will rise up from their difficulties as if they were eagles soaring upward to the heavens, will run upon their course of life as steadily as a racer who never tires or as one who walks for miles and miles and never grows weary. Jehovah will give those who believe in Him a measure of the divine strength that He Himself has.

### COMMENTS

v. 27-28 POWER IN JEHOVAH: If the people of the Lord (in this case Israel) are to receive the comfort He offers through the promised Servant, they must prepare, perceive and persevere. The people have, either unconsciously or deliberately, mentally reduced Jehovah to the level of their idol-gods. The influence of Baalism in Judah from the days of Isaiah to the captivity grew until the people practically called Jehovah Baal, and Baal Jehovah (cf. Isa. 66:17; Jer. 2:8; 12:16; 23:13; 23:27; Hosea 9:10; 13:1-2). When one reduces his concept of God to a wooden statue or a human philosophical system, one cannot help feeling his god is powerless to help him—for his god is nothing more than a creation of his own futility and frustration! Isaiah's people, however, had abundant teaching and evidence that Jehovah was eternal (see comments 40:21, etc.). Their complaint that Jehovah was unconcerned or unaware of their struggles was inexcusable. What their problems were at this time we are not told. It may refer to the political and military pressures being felt by the whole world as a result of the life-and-death struggle between the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Judah had become a political "pawn" on the

geographical chess-board of these two great world empires. So Judah was complaining that Jehovah was either incapable of protecting her rights (Heb. *mishepatyi*; *cause*) or impervious to her situation.

Isaiah reminds the people that historically they have had prophet after prophet teach them of Jehovah's omnipotence and omniscience. Generation after generation they have had demonstrations of His constant concern for them and His repeated miraculous deliverances. Their fault was that of so many of us—letting circumstances overwhelm us. Peter would have walked on water—until he saw the waves (Lk. 14:22-33). The people of Judah had another problem—they could not understand eternity, deity, supernaturalness. They understood (they thought) only the natural, experienceable. Like so many today, what cannot be understood or reduced to the experienceable cannot be believed. Isaiah confirms that Jehovah, being Eternal Creator, is fully understood by no human being. But that does not keep man from believing when he has sufficient evidence to believe. Man does not fully understand all the physical and material things he knows about (gravity, nuclear physics, tornados, etc.), but he forms certain fundamental beliefs from what evidence he does have and functions toward a purpose on that basis.

v. 29-31 PARTICIPATION BY FAITH: God is the source of all strength, physical and spiritual. But it is the spiritual, moral strength that is most important. God is able to fashion any kind of physical body He wishes (I Cor. 15:35-58). But the glorified, immortal body will house only a demon if the spiritual is not reborn, renewed. That renewal, though supplied by God, is participated in only by faith on the part of man.

The promise of renewal here then looks forward to the coming of the Messiah (the "consolation of Israel") (cf. Lk. 1:51-55; 2:25-32, etc.). The Hebrew word *kivvah* is translated *wait* but also means *trust*, *hope*. It seems paradoxical but the one who depends upon the Lord is the one who is strong (cf. II Cor. 12:9-10; Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; Phil. 4:13; II Tim. 4:17; I Pet. 5:10, etc.). The most perfect specimen of human strength

sooner or later exhausts his human resources. But the man who waits upon the Lord is strong and unmovable even when the physical body begins to deteriorate. Of course, the Lord is calling upon the people of Judah to trust Him presently in the midst of the circumstances which have caused them to doubt. They must believe now that He will fulfill what He has promised. Although they cannot understand His ways He is cognizant of their way and will supply spiritual and moral strength to them if they will participate by faith. He will not take away their circumstances, necessarily, but will supply them the spiritual strength to conquer their difficulties.

## QUIZ

1. Why did the people think Jehovah was unconcerned with their problems?
2. Did they have a right to such an attitude?
3. What was really their problem?
4. When was the promise of renewed strength to be ultimately fulfilled?
5. What is another meaning of "wait for Jehovah"?

## 2. CONQUEST, CHAPTER 41

### a. GENTILES SILENCED

TEXT: 41:1-7

1. Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength; let them come near; then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment.
2. Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot? he giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow.

- 3 He pursueth them, and passeth on safely, even by a way that he had not gone with his feet.
- 4 Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am he.
- 5 The isles have seen, and fear; the ends of the earth tremble; they draw near, and come.
- 6 They help every one his neighbor; and every one saith to his brother, Be of good courage.
- 7 So the carpenter encourageth the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil, saying of the soldering, It is good; and he fasteneth it with nails, that it should not be moved.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is the one from "the east" raised up by God?
- b. Which "isles" fear, tremble and encourage one another?

### PARAPHRASE

Shut up and listen to Me, all you heathen enemies of Mine. I challenge all My enemies to clothe themselves in all the power they can muster and present themselves before Me. Then, when they have all the strength they can muster, let them speak and we will enter into contest together. I want to ask you ahead of time, Who do you think is raising up from the east your conqueror and My executioner of justice? It is I, Jehovah, whose sovereign providence gives you into My servant's hand. I give all your kings to be ruled over by him and I give your people to be ground into dust and smashed into pieces like stubble by the sword and bow of his warfare. He chases all My enemies away and goes wherever he wishes in safety—even through territory unfamiliar and hostile to him. Who is capable of such omnipotence? It is He who, ever since there has been a human history, has called into existence the generations of

men—even Jehovah, the Eternal, Uncaused First Cause. He is, I AM! The pagan peoples see and fear. My servant will strike trembling terror into the hearts of all people. Still they will draw together with one another and unite in their opposition to him to help and encourage one another insisting he is not capable of overcoming them all. They will feverishly engage themselves in the production of new and more ornate idols. The craftsmen will urge one another saying, We are doing a good job on these idols—these will surely be great enough and permanent enough to keep us safe from him.

### COMMENTS

v. 1-4 JEHOVAH REIGNS: Just as the predicted *Comfort* of chapter 40 was to come to the Jews after their exile but realized ultimately in the Messiah, so the *Conquest* of chapter 41 is to come to the Jews (through Cyrus) but will be realized ultimately in the Messiah. Both *comfort* and *conquest* are to come to God's people through a *servant*. The *Servant* section (ch. 40-53) portrays three servants of Jehovah engaged in fulfilling His redemptive plan for mankind. *Cyrus*, *Israel* and the *Suffering Servant*, are the three servants of Isaiah's message. Cyrus and Israel are apparently types of the Suffering Servant—Cyrus typifying the conquering, judging aspect of the Messiah's work and Israel typifying the atoning, sanctifying aspect of the Messiah's work. Isaiah intertwines or meshes the work of all these closely together in this Servant section until it is difficult to distinguish which one he is describing. At times it appears he is describing both the type and the Antitype (e.g., Cyrus and the Messiah) in the same passage—as in our present passage.

The word *hkeriyshu* is translated *keep silence* and means literally, "to be blunted, dull, dumb, silent," or "to hold the peace." Jehovah *commands* silence. He is going to issue an omnipotent, omniscient edict. He is going to predict providential events which will alter the destinies of all men and all

nations. He is about to tell the world how He is going to "run things." Mankind insists it is going to tell God how it is going to "run the world." But God, through His prophet, commands, "Shut up, I'm going to tell you how I am going to run things."

The "islands" are the islands of the Mediterranean and Aegean. The isthmus of Greece and the islands of the Aegean (known as Javan to the Hebrews) represented the remotest regions of heathendom to the Hebrews of Isaiah's day. The Lord God is challenging the world that stands in opposition to His redemptive program to come before Him having clothed (*hkeliyphu*, Heb.) themselves in renewed strength and vigor and meet Him in a contest. The outcome of this contest will determine who "runs the world." Similar challenges are made by Jehovah in Joel 3:1-15 (see our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, pgs. 193-196) and Ezekiel 38-39. Joel and Ezekiel are predicting the battle of God and the world through Jesus Christ at the cross and the resurrection. We suspect that Cyrus' conquest of the world (bringing God's judgment upon it) and Cyrus' release of the Jews to return to their homeland (bringing God's redemption to them) was *typical* of the same battle at Calvary and the empty tomb.

The present passage speaks of Cyrus, emperor of Persia ("one from the east."). There can be little doubt about this when one sees the extended context of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1; 45:13; 46:11; 48:14-16). It predicts events and persons at least 100 years or more before they happened. Isaiah died about 700-690 B.C. Cyrus conquered Astyages in 550 B.C. and became sole ruler of Elam (Persia). Cyrus was probably born about 590-580 B.C.

Isaiah uses a word, *leaumiym* (root is *loam*), peculiar to his writings, which is translated *peoples*. It is less definite than either *goiym* or *'ammiym*, two other Hebrew words translated *peoples*. *Goiym* stands for *Gentiles*; *'ammiym* refers to a people as viewed by themselves, or, *we people*; *loamiym* stands for *all races* of people in general. God's announcement that He is going to take another omnipotent, providential step

in His program of redemption through Cyrus (bringing the world under the magisterial rule of Cyrus and return of the covenant people to their land) is not a provincial announcement—it is worldwide! Cyrus will be God's servant for all *races*!

Persia (today's Iran) was directly *east* of Palestine. In Isaiah's day it was known as Elam. The Persian empire flourished for approximately 200 years (549-332 B.C.) until Alexander the Greek conquered the world and turned it into a semi-Greek culture. "One from the east" definitely means Cyrus but probably includes all succeeding Persian emperors since the restoration of the Jewish people proceeded under Cyrus' successors (see our comments *Daniel*, College Press, pages 347-349). *Tsedeq* (translated *righteousness*) would be better translated *justice*. It may refer to the justice of God upon His enemies accomplished through Cyrus as a secondary agent, or, it may refer to the personal character of Cyrus. Both would be appropriate since God uses secondary agents to govern the world and administer justice and Cyrus (as well as most of his successors) was known for fair, honest and just treatment of his subjects. The Jews, especially, held the Persians in high esteem for the treatment they received at their hand.

God's challenge to the races is: Which god of the races is able to withstand the one from the east whom I will send to execute My justice? Jehovah, the God of Israel, gives temporary rule of His world to whomever He pleases (cf. Isa. 10:5-19; Jer. 27:1-11; Dan. 7:6; 9:24, etc.). When God's providence is decreed and predicted, nothing can thwart it! Cyrus shall, as God's servant, pound those who resist into dust and stubble with his weapons of war (sword and bow). Cyrus and his successors will conquer Asia Minor, Egypt, into India, and cross the Aegean and, for a time, occupy European soil in Greece. This is Cyrus II, or Cyrus The Great and few world conquerors have been regarded as highly as Cyrus. The Persians called him father. The Greeks regarded him as a master and lawgiver. When Alexander the Great found that Cyrus' tomb had been rifled (by Greek soldiers and grave robbers), he ordered that the body be replaced and the contents of the tomb



be restored as far as possible. To the Jews he was the Lord's anointed who ended the Babylonian exile and opened a new era in the history of Israel. Cyrus did not force Persian ideas on his subjects, but rather formed a synthesis of the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia, Syria, Asia Minor, the Greek cities, and parts of India. It is reported by some historians that he was a monotheist, which would have exalted his image in the eyes of the Jews.

Cyrus marched on and on in *shalom* (safety), into the far reaches of civilization unfamiliar and hostile to him, until he met his death in battle about 530 B.C. His body was carried back to Pasargadae, one of his capital cities. There his body was covered with wax, according to Persian custom, and placed in a stately, dignified tomb which was guarded by faithful priests for 200 years. The tomb is still standing, but its contents have long since been removed.

Who has wrought this? Are the passing events of history, the births of nations and their deaths, merely the results of chance arrangements of atoms? Is the governing of the world left to the whims of tyrants and anarchists? Is history cyclical and doomed to repeat itself forever—doomed never to reach the perfection it longs for? No! No nation exists apart from God. He calls the generations into existence. He makes rulers His servants. All of history, in one way or another, serves God's purpose. His purpose is to create out of mankind a kingdom of His own, trusting in His sovereignty, depending upon His grace, sanctifying itself in His holiness. The majority of men and women are in rebellion against God's purposes. The establishment of the kingdom of God (Christ as King, the church as the kingdom) began in a family (Seth, Noah and Abraham), expanded to a nation (the Israelites), then encompassed the world (the church). The very fact of the establishment of the kingdom program on earth, through men, pronounced the *judgment* of God upon all human governments and efforts to usurp God's sovereignty over man. Our text is simply another announcement by God that He is going to act through Cyrus to preserve His covenant people and His work

of establishing His kingdom. Thus, *all races* are called together for a demonstration of His sovereignty by the very fact that God is able, through His prophet, to predict the conquest of Cyrus one hundred years before Cyrus was born!

Delitzsch says of verse four, "It is the full meaning of the name Jehovah (*Yaweh*) which is unfolded here; for God is called Jehovah as the absolute I, the absolutely free Being, pervading all history, and yet above all history, as He who is Lord of His own absolute being, in revealing which He is purely self-determined; in a word, as the unconditionally free and unchangeably eternal personality."

v. 5-7 JAVAN REELS: One has only to read the history of Persian conquests to see the fulfillment of these verses. The isles of the Mediterranean and the Aegean reeled and trembled under the warfare of Persian armies. They formed alliances and coalitions against the Persians. By the summer of 539 B.C. the Persian armies were ready to attack Babylon. Nabonidus, sensing the situation, brought the gods of the outlying regions into his capital, trusting that they would aid him in his time of need. This antagonized the people whose gods were displaced and brought further resentment to the priests of Babylon. This appears to be a direct fulfillment of verses 5-7.

All during the Persian rule there were those segments of the empire resisting Persian friendship to the Hebrews (cf. Ezra 4:3-16). After the Persian empire, the Syrians (under the Seleucids) and the Egyptians (under the Ptolemies) opposed the work of God by persecuting the Hebrew people. Daniel predicts all these "times of trouble."

What Isaiah is predicting in verses 5-7 is that although Cyrus and the Persians shall be raised up by God to execute His judgment upon the heathen opposition to God's kingdom work, the heathen will tremble but they will not repent. They will unite, encourage one another, and continue to trust in gods of gold and wood. They will make newer and more gods, complimenting themselves that they have done a good job and that they have made gods that will survive the Servant of Jehovah.

Of course, new and better gods did not stop Cyrus. The Lord used him to fulfill that portion of the plan of divine redemption for which Cyrus was needed. Then, when the Lord needed Alexander the Great and all that his hellenization of the world could contribute to that redemptive plan, He permitted the Greeks to serve Him. Jehovah "runs the world" and there are not any gods of any race to usurp His sovereignty. Jehovah has silenced them all! Ultimately God silenced all His opposition at the cross and the empty tomb. Perhaps, in type, His work through Cyrus points to that ultimate moment!

### QUIZ

1. Who are the three Servants of this section?
2. Why does God command the peoples to be silent?
3. Where else does God challenge the world to meet Him in contest?
4. How does God call Cyrus "in righteousness"?
5. How "great" was Cyrus?
6. What is the point in God predicting through Isaiah, 100 years before, these events concerning Cyrus?
7. Did the people of the "isles" actually try to make new and better gods to stop Cyrus? When?

### b. GOD'S PEOPLE SAVED

TEXT: 41:8-13

- 8 But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen,  
the seed of Abraham my friend,  
9 thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth,  
and called from the corners thereof, and said unto thee,  
Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee  
away;  
10 fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for

I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

- 11 Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall not be put to shame and confounded: they that strive with thee shall be as nothing, and shall perish.
- 12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contend with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.
- 13 For I Jehovah thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

### QUERIES

- a. Why is Israel reminded of her servanthood?
- b. When did God bring to nothing those who made war against Israel?

### PARAPHRASE

But you, Israel, you are my chosen servant. You have a special heritage to fulfill because you are the descendants of Abraham whom I knew as My friend. Through him I fashioned you as a nation to serve me from out of the midst of heathendom. If I have done all this especially for you I certainly will not desert you if you will carry out your mission of service to Me. Therefore do not fear any of your enemies because I am with you. There is no reason for you to despair. I, Jehovah, am your God and I will give you divine strength and help. Yes, indeed, I will cause you to stand with My righteous and powerful right hand. Wait and see—all those who hate you will be confounded, humiliated and destroyed. Those who oppose you will be annihilated. Even if you go around looking for your enemies you will not be able to find any. I repeat, those who make war against you will be utterly obliterated.

It is I, the Lord your Great God, holding on to your right hand. And I say to you I will not let you go so do not be afraid.

## COMMENTS

v. 8-10 **SERVANTHOOD OF ISRAEL:** God chose the Hebrews for special servanthood. They were to serve Him as a consecrated, holy priesthood. (cf. Ex. 19:5-6; Lev. 25:55; Deut. 4:5-7; 7:6-8; 14:2; 26:18-19) By their consecration to His commandments they would be the human agency through which God could send the Redeemer in human flesh. They would also serve as witnesses to the glory of Jehovah to the nations round about them. The Lord did not choose Israel according to human standards, i.e., Israel was not large in population or wealth (Deut. 7:7). He chose Israel by His sovereign grace—because He loved her (Deut. 7:8; 10:12-22).

The point of this passage, however, is to allay the fears of the people of Isaiah's day. Isaiah's contemporaries were filled with terror at the threats of Assyria and Babylon. They began to despair that God would ever be able to fulfill His covenant to them. So Isaiah reminds them that if God could take a man like Abraham from a background of heathen idolatry, make him a friend of God and protect, sustain and multiply him into a nation, God can protect His people in Isaiah's day! If God can take that nation, from Abraham's loins, and deliver them from the power and temptations of Egypt, He can certainly deliver Isaiah's Judah from the threats of Assyria and Babylon. And if Isaiah's people will serve God and trust Him, He will fulfill His covenant with them. He is the same God who was with them in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the day of the Judges and in David's day.

v. 11-13 **SUBJUGATION OF ISRAEL'S ENEMIES:** Now the process by which God fulfills His covenant involves the preparation of a people to make them capable of receiving its fulness! This preparation involves discipline, repentance and holiness. The Lord did not take Moses and his people directly from

Egypt to Canaan. They demonstrated they were not mature enough for that, so they were disciplined forty years in the wilderness. In Isaiah's day it was apparent God's covenant people needed some severe discipline and serious penitence. Isaiah is attempting to prepare his people spiritually for the coming captivity. He is trying to reorient their thinking about who God is and what He does that they may have faith in Him in spite of the circumstances of the imminent exile.

The troubles of the Jews (called "indignation" by Daniel) did not cease with the Babylonian exile. Great and powerful enemies opposed the Jews ever after (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Rome, etc.). So, this passage has its fulfillment, not in genetic, national, Israel, but in the children of Abraham according to faith (Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:6-9; 3:15-29). It is readily apparent from the New Testament that God's deliverance of His covenant people from their enemies was not intended to be fulfilled physically, but spiritually (which is more important) (cf. Lk. 1:46-55; 1:68-79; Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 2:12-15, etc.). It is true, God preserved a physical nation, the Jews, until about 70 A.D. when they were scattered all over the world by the Romans. They are still a dispersed and dispossessed people today (in spite of the fact that a very small percentage of Jews maintain a very tenuous occupation of a portion of Palestine). But even this preservation of a physical nation until 70 A.D. was possible only because a small minority (remnant) of that nation trusted God and hoped in the messianic promises. Now that the Messiah's kingdom has been established physical, national relationship is no longer efficacious with God. Within the Messiah's kingdom there is neither Jew nor Gentile. God has always been interested in the spiritual man (Rom. 2:28-29), not just his nationality. The true Israel of God walks by the rule that neither circumcision (Jew) nor uncircumcision (Gentile) counts for anything, but a new creation (Gal. 6:15-16).

If Israel of Isaiah's day will serve the Lord by believing and obeying, He will deliver them from those who would oppose the redemptive work of God in the world. God will deliver

the Jews from Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Syria, Egypt and, in the days of the Roman empire He will fulfill His covenant through the Messiah. The Messiah will defeat once and for all the power of the devil. The Messiah will demonstrate historically that God is able to defeat even death. All the promises of God find their Yeal in Christ (II Cor. 1:20).

### QUIZ

1. What service was Israel to render as God's servant?
2. What was the basis upon which God chose Israel as His servant?
3. What is the point of emphasizing Israel's servanthood?
4. What enemies will God destroy?
5. What is the long-range fulfillment of this passage?

### c. GLORY TO GOD

TEXT: 41:14-20

- 14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith Jehovah, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
- 15 Behold, I have made thee to be a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.
- 16 Thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah, thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.
- 17 The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I Jehovah will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
- 18 I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the

midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

- 19 I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together:
- 20 that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

### QUERIES

- a. Why is Jacob called a "worm"?
- b. Did God ever make such physical changes to Palestine as are described in verses 18 and 19?

### PARAPHRASE

Do not be afraid Israel. Although you are as despised as a worm, I will help you, says Jehovah. Your Savior is the Eternal Holy One of Israel. I am going to make you grind your enemies into pieces like a new threshing sledge grinds wheat into chaff. Even though those who oppose you may be as formidable as great mountains, you will grind them down and blow them away into nothingness. Then you will give praise and glory to Jehovah and be filled with joy because the Holy One of Israel has delivered you. Right now you are spiritually destitute and in need of the living water and there is none. But I, Jehovah, will answer those who recognize their need and call upon Me. I will not forsake any of My faithful ones. In the midst of the thirst of My people for life I will open a river. I will completely reverse these conditions of spiritual aridness. The change will be miraculous. Those who remain faithful to Me will partake of life-giving water everywhere and will grow and produce fruit and will be like an oasis of trees and pools in a desert wilderness. The objective is that man may see, know, consider,



and understand together that the Lord, not man, created this miraculous change.

## COMMENTS

v. 14-16 **WORM WINS:** The Hebrew word *tola'ath* is translated worm and is the name of the *coccus worm* which was the worm used in making scarlet dye. It is the same word used in Psa. 22:6 in reference to the scorn and despite men will show the Messiah. Jacob (Israel) is called a worm by Isaiah to describe the scorn with which the nation is looked upon by its enemies. Assyria considers Judah with contempt (see comments Isaiah 36:8-9). It is interesting that God's covenant people are called "worm" and the Messiah calls Himself "worm" (Psa. 22:6). God is going to give the covenant people victory over their adversaries. They may go into captivity but eventually they will return, by the Spirit of God, to resume their service of messianic destiny. Their enemies will, one by one (Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) be ground to chaff (cf. Dan. 2:31-45, esp. 2:35), and blown away. A threshing sledge was a flat plank or planks of wood with rollers underneath studded with metal spikes for thrashing wheat. They were sometimes put to use by armies to torture and execute prisoners of war. This prediction of covenant victory over enemies ultimately was fulfilled in the Messiah. The Messiah's victory will usher in a universal kingdom of God (the church) and men of all nations will rejoice and give glory to the Holy One of Israel who accomplished it all (cf. Isa. 2:1-5; 19:16-25; Zech. 14:16-21, etc.).

v. 17-20 **WATER IN THE WILDERNESS:** Isaiah describes the destitution of the covenant people under another figure. They are "poor and needy" seeking water and there is none. They appear to be helpless and hopeless. We think this applies to their spiritual destitution. At no time has God ever physically watered all the wastelands of Palestine. This passage undoubtedly refers to the spiritual water of life to be supplied

by the Messiah (cf. John 4 and John 7). This passage is parallel to Isaiah, chapter 35 (see our comments there). The point is that God is going to completely reverse their spiritual situation from destitution to abundance. Edward J. Young comments: "The emphasis upon water and trees had also been found in the account of Eden in Genesis 3. Through the entrance of sin into the world, however, the garden was forfeited, and man entered a world where thorns and thistles would grow and he would labor by the sweat of his brow. In picturing the future age of blessing, the eschatological period when the restoration will occur, Isaiah uses the combined figures of water and trees. It is as though a bit of heaven had come down to earth; and indeed, those who one day will be blessed of these rivers and these trees are in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." And the objective for all this spiritual regeneration is to bring glory to the Holy One of Israel who shall do it. Israel, the worm, the poor and needy, is incapable of changing its despicable condition. God will, by His grace, send His Servant the Messiah to create the new order. Isaiah's contemporaries are called upon to believe the Lord's promise and wait upon Him in faith.

### QUIZ

1. What connection does "worm" have with the Messiah?
2. Who will rejoice in the victory of God's people over their enemies?
3. Why call Israel "poor and needy"?
4. What parallel passage in Isaiah helps understand the figures of water and trees?
5. What is the object of this great reversal of Israel's circumstances?

## d. GOOD TIDINGS

TEXT: 41:21-29

- 21 Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.
- 22 Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come.
- 23 Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.
- 24 Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you.
- 25 I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.
- 26 Who hath declared it from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is right? yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.
- 27 I am the first that saith unto Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.
- 28 And when I look, there is no man; even among them there is no counsellor, that, when I ask of them, can answer a word.
- 29 Behold, all of them, their works are vanity and nought; their molten images are wind and confusion.

## QUERIES

- a. Who is Jehovah challenging to “produce cause”?
- b. Who is being “raised up from the north”?
- c. Who is the “one that bringeth good tidings”?

## PARAPHRASE

All you who have put your trust in idols, I, Jehovah challenge you to demonstrate causes and reasons for such trust. Bring forth your idols and let them declare what is going to happen. I challenge them to tell what has occurred in years gone by and what it all means; and I challenge them to tell what is yet to come—predict the future. Indeed, your idols may prove they are deities if they are able to predict the future and do supernatural works of deliverance and judgment which will astound us. As a matter of fact, your idols are less than nothing and they can do nothing at all. Men and women who choose to worship idols are disgusting and detestable. I, the Lord, am going to raise up one (Cyrus) to deliver My people from their enemies. He will come from the east by way of the north and he will do My will. He will tear down rulers and kingdoms as easily as he does mortared walls. As the potter is able to trample upon the clay with which he works, so will this deliverer trample under foot his opposition. Which of the pagan deities have predicted this so that when it comes to pass we may know they are gods? Not a one! No other god known has said anything at all about it! I, Jehovah, was the first and only One to tell My covenant people, Look! Look! Your deliverers. Furthermore, I will give to Jerusalem a prophet to announce this good news of deliverance. But when I look among all the pagan deities there is not a single one who can give any kind of counsel—not a one of them answers My challenge. You see? they are all foolish, worthless things; these idols are all as empty as the wind.

## COMMENTS

v. 21-24 CHALLENGE: Now Jehovah is going to prove His previous claims that His covenant people need not fear the threats of their enemies (Assyria and Babylon). There were many in Israel and Judah listening to the alleged prophecies

of false prophets and the oracles of pagan gods. These false prophecies predicted the obliteration of the Jews and the downfall of the Jewish God, Jehovah. It seems astonishing that the Jews, with all their history of miraculous deliverances from the Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, etc., could ever doubt Jehovah's power. They had become so engrossed in politics, economics, pagan philosophies and just plain sensuality, they had no time for God and His Word. As a result when it became apparent they were going to be invaded by the awesome, terrifying hordes of Assyria and Babylon, they could not turn to Jehovah. They did not know Him! Most of the Jews turned to pagan soothsayers and idol-priests (cf. Isa. 8:16-22, etc.). But God, through the prophet Isaiah, is revealing that He will deliver His people from these terrible enemies. Positive, empirical, proof that Jehovah is their only Deliverer is demonstrated once and for all in fulfillment of prophecy. When history is predicted before it happens it is a claim to omniscience and omnipotence. When that prediction comes to pass it demonstrates deity. The authority of a prophet was proved by the fulfillment of his predictions (Deut. 18:21-22). Jehovah challenges all the pagan gods to give proof of their divine power by divulging the future. Jehovah challenges the idols and their priests to "declare the former things" which is a call to interpret past history. They cannot even do this! Then He calls them to "show us things to come." God does not want credulous worshipers. Preaching without proof and evidence is scarcely preaching at all. It encourages naked credulity and shallow conviction. So, when God sent Isaiah to produce faith in His deliverance, He gave proof and evidence of His power. That proof was that Jehovah could foretell, through His prophet, the future. Pagan deities could not. This same confrontation (between God's prophets and pagan idols) recurs over and over again in history (Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Paul). God does not shrink from the demand of authenticating credentials for His Word. What Jehovah predicts has already been recorded in 41:2ff in the "one from the east." The prediction is repeated in 41:25ff. But for now, Jehovah's challenge

goes unanswered and the conclusion is inevitable—idols are not gods! As a matter of fact, idols are less than nothing. The verdict is: idols are a totally minus-quantity and so is their work. They cannot do good nor can they do evil. Missionaries have found in modern pagan tribes demonstrations of the power the mind has over the body when the mind is “psyched” or hypnotized by superstition and fear. But they have also found that once the idol-worshipper sees a demonstration that their idol is “nothing” he is at once healed of his physical malady. Abomination is from the Hebrew word *tuaivah* which means abhorrent, disgusting, detestable, repugnant. Those who deliberately choose to worship idols soon become like the thing they worship (cf. Hosea 9:10; Psa. 115:3-8).

v. 25-29 CONFUTATION: The “one from the north . . . from the rising of the sun” is the same one from “the east” in 41:2, Cyrus, king of Persia (cf. comments 41:2ff). The massive armies of the great Mesopotamian empires (Assyria, Babylon, Persia) all swooped down on Palestine from “the north.” One only has to look at a map of the Near East to see that ancient armies could not march west over the Arabian desert since they had to sustain themselves by daily forage for food and water. So they marched north and came across the “fertile crescent” and entered Palestine from the north. Cyrus will be irresistible. He will do with the enemies of God’s people what a potter does with his clay. Now, says Jehovah, which pagan idol or pagan prophet foreknew any events to show they knew Israel’s destiny or the future history of Mesopotamian empires? Have any of their words ever been fulfilled so that men were obliged to say, “That idol was right”? Not a one! Not one word about Israel’s deliverance through the “one from the east” ever came from the heathen oracles. Jehovah, through His prophets, was first and only to make such a declaration. He announced that the Deliverer would come to Zion. Even in the midst of all His announcements of the future captivity He announces deliverance from it by the “one from the east.” This would be good news to Jerusalem. Of course, it would be good news only to those who believed. That was always a minority.

The majority of the people never even recognized the promises of deliverance because they refused to believe the predictions of judgment in the first place. And when one looked toward the pagan gods and prophets one could find no intimation whatsoever of this great deliverance. There is only stupid silence. They do not know the future. So they are nothing. They are powerless. They are just wind. Finis! The contest is over—God is victor. Jehovah conquers all for His people.

### QUIZ

1. Why did the Jews listen to pagan prophets?
2. Why does God give proof and evidence for His omniscience?
3. Why are those who choose idols an "abomination"?
4. Why did the Mesopotamian armies come from the north?
5. How much did the pagan oracles say about Israel's deliverance?
6. What is the conclusion of the contest between God and idols?

### 3. COVENANT, CHAPTER 42

#### a. SEE MY SERVANT

TEXT: 42:1-9

- 1 Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.
- 2 He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street.
- 3 A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth.
- 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.

- 5 Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:
- 6 I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;
- 7 to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.
- 8 I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images.
- 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and the new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is the "servant"?
- b. What is meant by "he will not cry, nor lift up his voice . . ." etc.?
- c. What does the name "Jehovah" mean?

### PARAPHRASE

Look! by faith see My Servant-Messiah whom I shall give My full support. He shall be sent as My chosen One, and My delight in Him shall be made manifest. I will demonstrate that I have put My Spirit upon Him. He will accomplish justice for the people of all nations. He will not be loud and boisterous. He will be gentle, meek and humble and will not practice self-seeking methods. He will not crush and exploit the helpless nor extinguish hope and faith. He will establish real justice and real truth. He Himself will not be quenched or bruised until He accomplishes His mission to establish justice for all



mankind. All mankind waits for His truth. This is what Almighty God, Creator of the heavens, Creator of the earth and the green grass, Creator of life, breath and spirit in all men who live upon the earth affirms: I Am Jehovah, Covenant-God, and I have called You, My Servant, to a covenant of righteousness. I have made solemn promise to You to clasp Your hand in Mine and to protect You. It is My purpose to give You for a covenant of Mine for all peoples—even a light to the pagans. I, Jehovah, am giving you to open the “eyes” of men’s minds which have been blinded by sin, to deliver all men who are imprisoned and enslaved in the dungeon of unbelief. I am Jehovah, Faithful-Promiser, that is My express nature; I share this glory with no other, least of all gods of wood and stone. Everything I, Jehovah, foretold in the past came to pass just as I said it would. These new things I tell you about My Servant will just as surely come to pass even though I tell you before they happen.

### COMMENTS

V. 1-4 CHARACTER OF THE SERVANT: The word *'avediy* is the Hebrew word for bond servant. There is another word, *sakiyr*, meaning hired servant. This is the Messiah! That is evident from Matthew 12:17-21. When the Incarnate God came to man, He came as a servant—the lowliest of servants—a slave (cf. Phil. 2:7 *doulou*, Gr. for slave). *Bekhiyriy* means “choice one” and *ratsethah* means “willing acceptance” (or “delight”). Of all the servants at Jehovah’s disposal, this One was the only acceptable One and so God chose Him. This Servant stands in peculiar relationship to Jehovah, He is the Son (cf. Jn. 1:18, etc.). This makes His servanthood astounding. Many servants have been elevated to sonship—but no father wants his son to suffer the indignities of servanthood (cf. Phil 2:5ff; Lk. 15:19ff). This Servant will be sustained by the Spirit of the Living God upon Him. He will have God’s Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:31-36) and in Him will all the

fulness of God dwell (Col. 1:19; 2:9). The Son is the only servant fit to establish the Father's covenant. He will come with all authority and faithfulness of the Father to deliver judgment, *mishphat*, in this instance meaning justice, to the *goiym* (Gentiles).

The nature of the Servant of Jehovah will be diametrically opposed to all human concepts of saviourhood or messiahship. He will not put on a huge show and make a lot of noise. He will not advertise nor hire a public relations man to create for Him a popular image. He will not call attention to Himself merely for His own satisfaction. He will not seek His own glory (cf. Jn. 5:41; 8:50). He comes humbly (cf. Zech. 9:9). He comes to save, not to win the acclaim of men. He comes to serve, not to be served. Most human saviours and deliverers reach their positions of power by exploitation, to one degree or another, of those less talented, poorer, or weaker than they. The world expects its messiahs to be ruthless, proud, indulgent and patronizing. Nietzsche's "Superman" was to be the result of elimination of all the weak people of the world. Nietzsche advocated breaking and crushing all the "bruised reeds" and quenching all the "dimly burning wicks." His philosophy declared all Jews and Christians weak. Adolph Hitler believed Nietzsche. Hitler was the self-acclaimed messiah of the German people. There have been politicians in our own country subscribing to the same philosophy. Their idea is that the masses are too ignorant to know what is best for them; break them, quench them; then patronize them with all-encompassing government. But the Servant of Jehovah comes to be a servant of the bruised and dimly-burning. He comes to heal and help. He will be a King who serves His subjects—even to die for them. He will search their hearts and personalities and find any spark of good and fan it, if possible, into a flame of faith and holiness. He will pour Himself into them to give them a power to reach their highest potential. He does not befriend them to take from them, but to give to them. This servant will be a suffering Servant (Isa. 53:1-12); He will be a shepherd-ing Servant who tenderly feeds the sheep, not one who devours

the flock (Ezek. 34:1-31). The Servant of Jehovah will establish what is right (justice) by what is true (in truth). He will not be fooled by appearances; He will not judge by partiality; He will not accept or practice falsehood. He will personify absolute truth.

There is an interesting play-on-words between verses 4 and 3. In verse 3 the verbs *ratsuts* (bruised) and *kehah* (growing dim) are used again in different form *yikeheh* (He will not *grow dim*) and *yaruts* (He will not be crushed) in verse 4. He will, in the flesh, in servant-form, be victorious and able to help the crushed and quenched! (cf. Heb. 4:14-16).

v. 5-9 COMMISSION OF THE SERVANT: God's Servant will come (a) with all the power of the Almighty Creator, (b) in divine righteousness, (c) in divine fellowship, (d) as the covenant of God personified, (e) to deliver, (f) and to fulfill the promises of Jehovah and thus to glorify Him.

This Servant will be sent with all the authority and power of Jehovah. He will have creative power resident in Him. He will do the work of the One and Only True God. The implication of verses 5 and 6 are that the Servant will have all the power to create matter and life that Jehovah has. But the most important mission of the Servant will be "righteousness" and "for a covenant." The Servant's primary objective will be to involve the Gentiles! This is no covenant of commandments, only, but a covenant whose terms and relationships are in a Person, a Life, the Son of God. The Servant Himself will come as Man to accomplish and earn the covenant relationship with Jehovah by suffering the penalty of man's breaking covenant (cf. Mt. 26:26-29; Mt. 20:28; Lk. 24:44-49; Heb. 10:1-25, etc.). Men may enter into that covenant by a relationship of personal faith in Him and His redemptive work, allowing that faith to produce His character in them. The Servant furnishes the righteousness—the covenant-members receive it by faith and obedience. The main thrust of Jesus' ministry was to persuade His people that He was equal with the Creator and that the Covenant of Jehovah was to be Personified in Him. Both of these concepts were rejected and despised by

the main body of Jewish people in Jesus' day, not because Jesus failed to demonstrate evidence to substantiate His claims, but because they did not have the love of God in their hearts (cf. John, ch. 7, 8, 9).

To understand the primary meaning of the prediction that the Servant will "open the blind eyes," and "bring out the prisoners," etc., one must compare Isaiah 61:1-2 with Luke 4:16f. Jesus did not do many mighty works in Nazareth, and yet He declared the "release of captives," and "recovering of sight to the blind," was being fulfilled in the very act of "preaching the good news to the poor" there in Nazareth. So, this mission of the Messiah-Servant is not to find its ultimate fulfillment in physical healing alone.

The people of Isaiah's day may as well stop worshipping idols for the glory of Jehovah will be manifested in only one, Himself, Incarnate in the Servant-Son. This is final, absolute and certain to come to pass. Just as surely as the former things God predicted through previous prophets (Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, et al.) so these "new things" which Jehovah predicts through Isaiah, as incredible as they are, will certainly come to pass. The indication is that the people must surrender to the will of God that their salvation is not in national or ethnic relationship but relationship to Him and the Servant whom He shall send, (cf. Jn. 5:23, 38; 6:29).

### QUIZ

1. This Servant is the Messiah. Does the N.T. substantiate Jesus as the Servant of Jehovah? Where?
2. What is to be the nature of this Servant?
3. How does this nature compare with that of human saviorhood?
4. How does the Servant become Jehovah's covenant?
5. What is the primary fulfillment of the Servant's opening the eyes of the blind?
6. Why the warning that Jehovah will not give His glory to another?

## b. SING A SONG OF PRAISE

TEXT: 42:10-17

- 10 Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.
- 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.
- 12 Let them give glory unto Jehovah, and declare his praise in the islands.
- 13 Jehovah will go forth as a mighty man; he will stir up his zeal like a man of war: he will cry, yea, he will shout aloud; he will do mightily against his enemies.
- 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry out like a travailing woman; I will gasp and pant together.
- 15 I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and will dry up the pools.
- 16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things will I do, and I will not forsake them.
- 17 They shall be turned back, they shall be utterly put to shame, that trust in graven images, that say unto molten images, Ye are our gods.

## QUERIES

- a. Who is to sing to Jehovah?
- b. Why a "new" song?

## PARAPHRASE

Sing to Jehovah a new song appropriate to the new thing He will do. Sing His praises all over the whole earth. Let all who travel over the world by sea and every creature in the sea sing to Jehovah. Let all the coastlands around the sea, the islands, and all who inhabit them sing to the Lord. Let the inhabitants of the desert cities and villages of Arabia and Edom shout loud praises from their mountain tops. Let all the Gentiles in the far off western islands praise and glorify Jehovah as God. The reason the whole earth should sing and shout the praises of Jehovah is that Jehovah is going forth as a mighty warrior to win a decisive and complete victory over His enemies and all who oppose His redemptive work for man. Jehovah says He has held Himself in restraint against His enemies long enough. Now, like the great inhalations and expirations of a woman gasping in child-delivery, that which I have so long concealed in Myself shall be accomplished. I will make the land of My enemies a waste land; its hills and mountains I will level; its vegetation I will kill with drought; I will dry up its rivers and pools until they are dry land. I am going to devastate My enemies. The ones My enemies have captured and made blind I will deliver by a deliverance known only to Me. I will lead them along a Way they can never discover. I will turn their darkness into light and all the rugged hindrances and crooked places will be straightened out by Me. These are the things I will do, says Jehovah, and I will not forsake all these blind ones. When I accomplish this great, magnificent victory, it will reveal the utter shame of idolatry and cause those who worship idols to recognize the impotence of idols.

## COMMENTS

v. 10-12 SING TO JEHOVAH: God's people are invited to sing. The motive for this is the promise of the coming Servant and the great victory He will win and the deliverance He will

accomplish. The work of the Servant will be so unique (spiritual deliverance) that it will be a *NEW* song. The subject matter for the lyrics of this song has never been available before (the redemption of the Christ). God's people have always been able to sing praises for God's love, power, deliverance (cf. Ps. 40:3; 42:8; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1; Isa. 30:29, etc.). But this *new* song will be one unknown to angels for it will be known only to the redeemed (cf. Rev. 14:3; 15:3-4). It will be a song to be sung by the universal kingdom of God—people from the western isles (Gentile regions) will sing it (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:12-17). No area is to be excluded from the invitation to sing this new song—not even those who dwell in wilderness (sparsely inhabited) regions. Of course, one must believe and appropriate the Life the Servant provides before one may sing the song—but all are invited.

This passage, and the many others about songs of believers, would lead us to think that the lyrics of Christian music should be restricted primarily to the objective deeds of God and Christ in the great work of redemption and much less (than in the current fad) to the subjective experience of the song writers. The great redemptive acts of God do not vary and are not dependent upon the vascillating fickleness of human emotions and feelings for their apologetic or persuasive value. Human "religious experiences" are dependent upon feelings. Not everyone feels the same way all the time. But God's deeds are always true, no matter how anyone feels. "Let them give glory unto Jehovah . . ."

v. 13-17 SONG OF JUSTICE: The song will be about God's long awaited defeat of His enemies having finally been completed. God has, for good reasons of his own, held back in sending the Servant to defeat His enemies once and for all. It has not even been easy for Jehovah to refrain from doing battle and winning the victory. Many prophets and godly men have questioned and will continue (e.g., Habakkuk; the apostles, Acts 1:6) to question God's time-table of kingdom establishment. But God will do things when the time is right (cf. Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1, etc.). And so the time came for God

to "disarm the principalities and powers and make a public example of them, triumphing over them in him" (Col. 2:15). That was when He destroyed the power of the devil (Heb. 2:14-18). All this will cost God pain and travail. The great Creator will agonize and hurt because in accomplishing the work of redemption He will make Himself vulnerable by loving through the Incarnate Son as He has never loved before. The agony and pain of God will be manifested physically in the Son and His blood-stained cross.

All the things men have depended upon before will be "dried up" and the "blind" will be delivered from the enemies of Jehovah by the Servant's leading in a way no one knows. It was very apparent when Jesus began to teach concerning the Kingdom of God that no one knew God's way. Men had to have it revealed to them. So Jesus revealed it—in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Sermon on Parables. Only the humble and penitent were able to recognize the Way (cf. Harold Fowler's comments, *Matthew, Vol. I & II*, College Press, on the above sermons). The blind in the passage before us refers to the spiritually blind (cf. Isa. 9:2; 61:1-2; Mt. 4:12-17; Lk. 4:16-30; Jn. 9:35-41; Rev. 3:15f).

But while the blind will be led to the light, those who think they see through idolatry (vain philosophies of worldly-minded) will be turned back and utterly put to shame. As a matter of fact, what becomes deliverance for the true Israel of God (the redemptive work of the Servant—death and resurrection), becomes a complete defeat for God's enemies (idolatry and all other human ideologies). If idolatry and human philosophy's attempts to deal with the human predicament (sin) are ever to be put to shame it is through the historically accomplished and historically eyewitnessed bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the light of what God did through this great event, it is the shame of all shames to worship gods of human origin—be they of stone and wood or philosopher's minds.



## QUIZ

1. What is the motive for the song that is to be sung by believers?
2. Why is it a *new* song?
3. Who can know this song?
4. What should be the lyrics of Christian songs?
5. When did God finally stop refraining from His long awaited defeat of His enemies?
6. Who are the blind?
7. What is the shame of all shames?

## c. SIGHTLESS SERVANTS

TEXT: 42:18-25

- 18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.
- 19 Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant?
- 20 Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not.
- 21 It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness sake, to magnify the law, and make it honorable.
- 22 But this is a people robbed and plundered; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.
- 23 Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear for the time to come?
- 24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not Jehovah? he against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law.
- 25 Therefore he poured upon him the fierceness of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round

about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

### QUERIES

- a. Who are the "blind" of verses 18 and 19?
- b. How did Jehovah make the law "honorable"?

### PARAPHRASE

People of God, servants of Jehovah, open your ears and listen; open your blind eyes and see what I am showing you. But then, who in all the world is as blind as My servant Israel or as deaf as Israel who was sent as My messenger in the earth? I repeat, the blindness of Israel who is supposed to be allied to Me in friendship and peace, supposed to be My confidant, is incredible! You see much but you do not keep what you see; you listen to many things but you do not obey them. To display His own righteousness, Jehovah was glad to give to Israel a great and glorious revelation of Himself in His law. And yet, His greatness and gloriousness is not reflected in this people of the law for they are a people robbed, enslaved, imprisoned, trapped, fair game for all their enemies and, having refused Him, there is no one to protect them. Oh, isn't there just one of you who will listen to Me and My prophet? Isn't there one who will learn from all the instruction and experience of this nation and obey and avert the ruin that awaits disobedience? Don't you know Who let Israel be robbed and hurt? Was it not plain to you that it was Jehovah? It was the Lord this people sinned against when they refused to walk in His ways and did not obey His law. On account of this disobedience God poured out upon Israel His divine fury in war and other calamities—still Israel refused to recognize that this was chastening from Jehovah.

## COMMENTS

v. 18-22 INCREDIBLE: That the “servant” in this section is Israel cannot be denied when the reader sees the context. The servant could not possibly be the Messiah for it is said of the servant here that he is blind, deaf, observes not, hears not, is robbed, plundered, none delivers, etc. In verse 19 the servant is *meshullam*, the Hebrew word translated “at peace,” a derivative of *shallom*. Keil and Delitzsch say “it is the passive of the Arabic *muslim*, one who trusts in God,” or the surrendered one. This characterization of what God intended Israel to be in servanthood intensifies the contrast with what Israel is portrayed as being. That Israel should be so blind is incredible. Jehovah has the prophet repeat the rhetorical question for emphasis! (see Jer. 18:12-13; Amos 3:9-10).

Israel had been privileged to “see” many things. Israel had the law of God revealed in human language to read and study; he had the record of the historical deeds of God’s miraculous deliverances and chastenings upon his nation. But Israel’s response did not match his opportunity. Israel did not keep what he saw and heard. In verse 20 two fundamental Hebrew words are used; *shemor* (from *shemar*) meaning to *keep*, and *shama*, meaning to *obey* or *hear*. To the Hebrew, hearing was equivalent to obeying. When a person did not obey, he had not heard!

It was Jehovah’s good pleasure to magnify the manifestation of His character and demonstrate the gloriousness of His nature through His holy law. This was the sovereign way God chose to exhibit His holiness to man providing man with a motive and means of partaking, through faith, in that holiness. The law of God was holy and good (cf. Rom. 7:12), it was the free rebellion of man against what he knew to be holy that was wrong, not the law (cf. Rom. 7:13-14; 8:3). The law of God, humbly believed and obeyed, would have driven the Israelites to trust in the promised and typified mercy of God to come—and that is just where God could have saved them and used them as servants. But, incredible as it was, they chose to trust

in alliances with Egypt and Assyria, to worship heathen gods, and as a result enslaved themselves under Assyrian tribute (see comments chapter 7). They would, in another generation or two of rebellion against the law of God, make themselves easy prey for the Babylonian captivity.

v. 23-25 INCORRIGIBLE: The question of verse 23 is a wish that *one* might be found among the nation (cf. Jer. 5:1-2) who will hear and obey. Is there not one who will learn from history and prepare themselves for the judgment that is to come upon this nation? Have they all forgotten that it was Jehovah who gave their forefathers over to judgment and chastening (cf. Amos 4:6-12). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word *shama* is translated *obedient* in our English version of verse 24. The Hebrew word translated *law*, is *torah*. The nation, for the most part, was incorrigible. They deliberately and obstinantly chose not to walk in the ways of Jehovah (cf. Jer. 6:16-19). They refused to learn from the history of their rebellious ancestors in the wilderness wanderings and the days of the Judges. Time and time again God chastened Israel by slaughter of war, destruction of her cities, drought, pestilence—still Israel knew it not. It was not a lack of an authentic historical record of God's divine deeds—it was a moral unwillingness to accept it.

## QUIZ

1. What are the reasons the "servant" of these verses cannot be the Messiah?
2. How is Israel characterized in verse 19?
3. What did Israel do with the many things he had been privileged to "see" and "hear"?
4. What did the law manifest?
5. Did Israel's rejection of the law mean the law was not good?
6. Did Israel's incorrigibility stem from lack of ability to know about God's chastening?

## 4. CALL, CHAPTER 43

## a. TO BE A POSSESSION

TEXT: 43:1-7

- 1 But now thus saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.
- 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
- 3 For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I have given Egypt as thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in thy stead.
- 4 Since thou hast been precious in my sight, and honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men in thy stead, and peoples instead of thy life.
- 5 Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;
- 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth;
- 7 every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made.

## QUERIES

- a. Why remind Israel she belongs to God?
- b. When will Israel walk through waters?
- c. When will the great "gathering" take place?

## PARAPHRASE

And now, in light of the foregoing, Jehovah says, I am your Creator and your Former, O Israel, so you need have no fear. I have redeemed you in the past and will do so in the future. You are mine; I have special claim on you. You did not even name yourself—I did. You were singled out by Me for a special purpose. So, when you have to pass through dangerous waters and flooded rivers you need not fear they will overcome you; when you have to walk through fires of your oppressors you will not be burned—you will not even be touched by the flames. You know who I Am, I Am Jehovah, Covenant God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I have paid a high price for you giving up whole continents like Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba as a ransom for you. Ever since the time you became My precious possession I have honored you and loved you dearly. And on account of My love for you I will continue to exchange the lives of other peoples to keep you as My special people. Do not be afraid of your enemies, for I, Your Covenant-God, Am with you always. Even if you are scattered all over the world, I promise to gather my sons and daughters from the east, west, north and south. Yes, every one who will surrender to be called by My name, I will have produced as a new creation, will have shaped him and perfected and completed him for My glory.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-4 REDEMPTION: This chapter forms the climactic statement of God's *Purpose* for Israel's servanthood—to be God's Called. This chapter also forms the conclusion to the preceding discussion of the interrelation of national Israel—covenant Israel—to the Messiah. This whole section of *Salvation Through God's Servant* (chapters 40-53), is a kaleidoscopic view of the correlation of Israel and the Messiah. Israel was called for the messianic purpose, but she sinned. God must chasten her to purify her. After her purification she will be redeemed and

from her will come the Messiah and His kingdom in which only the regenerated shall dwell.

Two words are used in verse one to emphasize Jehovah's claim upon Israel; *bara*, create and *yatzar*, form, shape, are the distinctive Hebrew words showing God's unique relationship to Israel. She is His possession by right of His having brought her into existence and having molded her into what He wants her to be. The Hebrew word for *redeemed* is *goael* and a derivative of the same word is sometimes translated *kinsman* (cf. Ruth 3:2, etc.). Israel is kin to God by creation and redemption. Israel is God's child, His son, His bride (cf. Ezek. 16:1f; Hosea 11:1f; Isa. 49:14-18; 62:1f, etc.). Israel is God's precious possession. The placing of the two names of verse one are interesting. *Yaakoov*, *Jacob*, means "defraud, circumvent, crooked, deceitful," while *Yisrael*, *Israel*, means "prevail, prince or ruler of God, or perhaps, God will rule." *Israel* is the name God gave Jacob after Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and prevailed. Hosea appeals to the spineless, compromising Israel of his day to take again the character of its forefather who was so singleminded about striving for the spiritual birthright (cf. Hosea 12:2-6). So, Israel was what God named this nation because He redeemed it or purchased it, not only through the change made in Jacob's character, but also throughout her history. This is what God calls Israel—mine!

Not only has God redeemed Israel, He will continue to do so. He will *protect* her. When she is forced to go through waters (probably when being taken captive, for there were hardly any bridges over rivers then) God will keep her from being swept away. When they were forced to walk through fire, God would not allow the flame to consume them. A literal fulfillment of protection from fire is recorded in the event with the three Hebrew men (Daniel 3:1-30) in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. The point is Israel need not fear extinction for God is powerful and mighty to save from any thing. God could even save them from lions (Daniel), hangmen (Esther) and their own countrymen (Jeremiah).

Jehovah, Creator of all mankind, is jealous enough for Israel, His precious servant, called to glorify His name in all the earth, He is willing to give up other nations and peoples as a substitutionary ransom to keep Israel. God is ready to sacrifice practically the whole African continent (as was then known, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba) if need be to keep Israel free to fulfill her messianic destiny. Some think this is a prediction that God is willing to, and did, assign Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba to Persia as compensation for their letting Israel return to Palestine by the edict of Cyrus (cf. II Chron. 36; Ezra 1). Egypt and Ethiopia did submit to the Persian yoke in the days of Cambyses (cir. 527-526 B.C.), about 10 years after the return of the exiled Jews to Palestine.

From the time the promise was given to Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Israel became precious to Jehovah. From that time on God placed the interests of Israel above those of other peoples. Young says, "Perhaps the general thought is simply that in choosing Israel God passed by other nations and thus they were sacrificed (i.e., were the ransom price) in its place." The point, of course, is not that Israel of itself merits this evaluation of preciousness; the point is God's grace. Paul makes this matter clear in Romans, chapters 9-10-11. Israel's preciousness consists solely in God's sovereign choice of her to be His servant. The same is true of the new Israel, the church. The church is precious not because of the merit of the human beings in her membership but because of God's sovereign redemption by grace to the church in the unique work of Christ, offered through belief and obedience of the Gospel. The preciousness of the church is shown in that God was willing to offer His *monogenes*, "only, unique" Son as a ransom.

v. 5-7 REGENERATION: The captivity, which was certain to come, was symbolic of the estrangement between Israel and God. Israel willfully and deliberately separated themselves from His holiness (cf. Isa. 30:1-14, etc.). The separation was not God's choosing. However, in order to demonstrate vividly Israel's need for God's holy fellowship, God delivered her to



captivity. But Israel is not to fear. Because a remnant has believed the prophets and remain true to Jehovah, He will bring them back from all over the earth to their land again and to their appointment with destiny. That return from the exile, however, is only a first step. The meaning of these verses is by no means restricted to the return from the captivity. As Young says, "In a far deeper sense it is addressed to all those who are afar off, who can be brought to the true Mount Zion only by the gracious working of the Lord . . . The reference is to the spiritual gathering of lost sinners in Jesus Christ." The "seed" refers to the spiritual descendants of Jacob. There are plenty of references in Isaiah to demonstrate this principle (cf. comments on Isa. 19:16-25, etc.).

Verse seven indicates that God is referring to His spiritual people and not just physical Israel, when it says "every one that is called by my name." Jesus made plain who God's sons were in John 8. Not all descended from Israel belong to Israel (cf. Rom. 9:6; Rom. 2:25-29; Gal. 6:13-16, etc.). Anyone who does not come to God through Jesus Christ is not called by God's name. The arrangement of the words, *created*, *formed*, and *made*, seem to be in an ascending scale depicting the work of God in the redemption of those called by His name. First there is the *new creation* (the initial new birth, becoming a Christian), then the *shaping* or *molding* of that life into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another and last the *perfecting* or *consummating* work of glorifying the child of God. Isaiah is talking about a regeneration. He is depicting the bringing from an Israel that was one only in name, to Israel that is one in truth!

## QUIZ

1. In how many ways did Israel belong to God?
2. What is significant about the arrangement of the names Jacob and Israel?
3. When did some Israelites literally experience salvation from fire?

4. How did God ransom Israel by using other nations and peoples?
5. What makes the new Israel, the church, so precious to God?
6. What evidence is there that verses 5-7 probably refer to messianic times?

## b. TO BE A PROCLAIMER

TEXT: 43:8-13

- 8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.
- 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled; who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth.
- 10 Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.
- 11 I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour.
- 12 I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God.
- 13 Yea, since the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who can hinder it?

## QUERIES

- a. Who are the "blind" and "deaf" challenged in verse eight?
- b. Why is God so concerned about Israel's witnessing?

## PARAPHRASE

I, Jehovah, challenge the blind heathen to bring forth their gods and their soothsayers who claim they can see and hear supernatural things. Gather all the heathen nations as one; who among their gods can proclaim anything like My present prediction of the restoration of My people Israel? To prove that they can, let them cite former events which they predicted and which had really taken place. Let them present their eyewitnesses of such earlier prophecies and so prove themselves to be gods by substantiating the truthfulness of their claims. But I call you, Israel, as witness of the historical facts concerning My infallible knowledge of the future, says Jehovah. You have been Mine in a special, miraculous relationship and you can certainly testify to that experience of service. You, Israel, have enough evidence to know and believe that I Am the only God there is. There was no god before Me and there shall be none after Me. I, indeed I, am Jehovah; there is no other saviour. I have declared My power and have shown you My power by My great saving acts among you. This demonstrated to you that there was no foreign god who could claim to be a god. You have seen My deeds, you know that I am God, and therefore, you, Israel, are My witnesses. As long as time has existed, from the first day of time and before that, I Am; there are no other gods anywhere; there is no one to stop what I wish to do.

## COMMENTS

v. 8-10 MESSENGER: Israel was called by God to be His servant as a testimony among the nations of Jehovah's sovereignty (cf. Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:6-7; 14:2; 26:18; 28:10; Psalms 135:4; Lev. 20:24-26; Deut. 7:6). The passage before us deals with God's call to this servanthood. Israel had not fulfilled her purpose (cf. Amos 3:9-11; Jer. 2:9-13; 18:13), she "out-heathened the heathen." She was given the land of Canaan

to show the heathen nations the holiness of God, but she became more unholy than the heathen around her! Now, Isaiah, speaking for Jehovah, is calling for a remnant of Israel to turn again to this God-oriented purpose. *Y' 62*

The "blind" and the "deaf" are the Gentiles who claim they have "eyes" and "ears" to see and hear what is truth through their idols and diviners. But Jehovah challenges them to gather all the idols and soothsayers of all the nations on the earth and bring forth evidence of their abilities. God has challenged the heathen gods many times before (Moses and the Egyptian magicians; Elijah and the prophets of Baal) and He makes the challenge many times after this (Isa. 44:9f; Daniel 1-6, etc.). God is predicting, through His prophet Isaiah, the captivity and restoration of Israel. Which one of the heathen gods Israel has adopted is able to infallibly foretell the future like Jehovah? The false prophets of Israel are continually insisting that no captivity will come to them (cf. Micah 3:9-12). If the heathen gods Israel worships are gods, let them bring a record of their prophetic successes of the past. How many historical events have they foretold and seen fulfilled? Jehovah is not afraid of such a challenge for He knows they are not gods (Jeremiah demonstrated the impotence of the false prophets when he challenged the predictions of Haniah, Jer. 28:1-17). The god of Israel is the only God of truth. He alone has the truth. He alone knows righteousness and holiness. Israel is the only messenger of truth and righteousness, but they have rejected this servanthood for false gods. The challenge to the nations to amalgamate all their powers and present the best opposition they can to the sovereignty of Jehovah is much like the challenge in Joel 2:30—3:21 (see our comments there in *Minor Prophets*, by Butler, College Press).

The heathen opposition has no witnesses and no evidence. But Jehovah has. Israel is God's witness. In fact, this is their destiny. Israel is not called to be a mighty worldly power dominating other nations and exercising world-empire. That never was Israel's destiny and never shall be. The new Israel, the

church, is not of this world. Israel testified by her very existence and was called to testify by her deeds and words that Jehovah is the only God. Leupold says, "Monotheism is Israel's most precious insight. Whatever indications along this line had begun to glimmer here and there in divine revelation, all this now comes to clear expression and is finalized by our prophet." God had chosen Israel to be His servant, to be the instrument through which He could manifest His power and glory and holiness to all the earth. Israel had plenty of empirical proof of Jehovah's sovereignty. There was no reason for Israel not to know and believe there was only One God! But Israel set aside reason in favor of greed, lust and pride. For this the prophets often characterized their countrymen as irrational, stupid, perverse, self-willed, stubborn (cf. Ezek. ch. 2 & 3, etc.). The prophets did preserve a small remnant of faithful who did become witnesses in all the earth to the sovereignty of Jehovah. The dispersion of these faithful by the Persians, Greeks and Romans prepared the way for the preaching of the gospel all over the world in the first century A.D.

v. 11-13 MESSAGE: The absolute sovereignty of Jehovah is the message Israel is to proclaim. They are witnesses to it. They have seen and heard first-hand—for that is what a witness is. A witness does not tell what he thinks or feels—he tells what he has seen and heard. What Israel has seen is only Jehovah can save. Jehovah demonstrated to the sensory organs of man (eyes, ears, touch, etc.) that He alone saves. Jehovah did not reveal His saving power to Israel in a systematic philosophy—He revealed it in deeds, events, in the historical, human frame-of-reference. He also demonstrated experientially that none of the gods of man, none of the pagan idols, could save. Therefore, Israel *must* be God's witness. God has not revealed Himself so precisely and extensively to any other people. God has no other witnesses. Isaiah knows about such a "manifest destiny." When Isaiah was in the temple, God asked, "Who will go for us, whom shall I send?" (cf. Isa. 6).

There cannot be another witness and there cannot be another God. There is only one God. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

He had no beginning and has no end. Where is there one who can gainsay that!? God may be morally rejected and disobeyed, but His eternal power and deity cannot rationally be denied (cf. Rom. 1:16f). Philosophy, science or psychology can never *disprove* the existence of God. Men would have to know everything there is to know, have existed everywhere there is existence in order to absolutely disprove God. So far, all the evidence proves beyond any *reasonable* doubt, that Jehovah does exist and none can deliver out of His hand and none can hinder whatever He wants to do!

### QUIZ

1. What does the Bible say in other books about Israel's call?
2. What is God's challenge to the heathen concerning their gods?
3. Where has another challenge to pagan powers like this been issued in the prophets?
4. If there was plenty of evidence for Israel to witness the sovereignty of God, why didn't she?
5. What is a witness?
6. How did Israel qualify as a witness?
7. Why *must* Israel be God's witness?

### c. TO BE A PROTOTYPE

TEXT: 43:14-21

- 14 Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing.
- 15 I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.
- 16 Thus saith Jehovah. who maketh a way in the sea, and a

- path in the mighty waters;
- 17 who bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the mighty man (they lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinct, they are quenched as a wick):
- 18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.
- 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.
- 20 The beasts of the field shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen,
- 21 the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise.

### QUERIES

- a. How does Babylon enter into the picture here?
- b. What "way" does Jehovah make in the sea?
- c. What are the "rivers in the desert"?

### PARAPHRASE

A prediction! Your Covenant-God, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says, For you I have decreed the doom of Babylon. I have determined to send an army to Babylon to execute My decree and I will defeat them and send them all fleeing like fugitives in the merchant ships and battle ships they are so proud of now. Though you are about to go into captivity and be without a human king, I want you to know I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your only real and everlasting King. It is Jehovah who says all this; the God who makes pathways in the seas as He did through the Red Sea when He delivered your forefathers from Egypt. Jehovah was the One who brought that great Egyptian army with its horses

and chariots to its grave in the sea. Jehovah literally extinguished the enemies of His people there, like a man blows out a lamp. But, do not let your minds dwell on the past to the point that you wish you could go back to those days. Look! That is nothing compared with what I am going to do! I am going to do something completely new; in fact, I have already begun it. Do you not recognize what I am starting to do? I am beginning to make drastic changes that will affect the whole world. I am going to give living water to a desert-type world of humanity through my servant-people, my chosen, as they testify to My redemptive acts.

### COMMENTS

v. 14-17 OPPRESSOR DEFEATED: God makes a prophetic decree. He dooms Babylon, the oppressor of His covenant remnant, *before* Judah is taken captive. Babylon is already looming on the political horizon as a pagan world power standing in opposition to God's redemptive people (cf. comments on chapter 39, Vol. II). How does Jehovah "send" to Babylon and bring them down? Apparently this is a prophecy of the Persian conquest of Babylon. It was the Persians who after conquering Babylon, decreed and financed the return of the Jews to Palestine (see our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, chapters 7-9). The Persians served as God's instrument to execute His deliverance of Judah. There is a great deal of irony in the predicted Babylonian fall. They will flee like fugitives. Once proud, secure, self-sufficient, powerful Babylon who made so many flee their homelands as fugitives will suffer the same fate (see Habakkuk's description of the fall of Babylon). Even more ironic, the great fleet of merchant ships and navy vessels which made Babylon so rich and powerful, and which brought so much gladness to the hearts of the Babylonians, will be jammed full of terrified, fleeing fugitives. The Chaldeans, like the Assyrians, had mighty warrior kings. They were rich, powerful and pompous. They were feared



and idolized by all the world. But Israel's king is *King of kings!* He is Jehovah, Creator, Judge, Holy One and Redeemer. Though Israel might appear to be without a king during the captivity in Babylon, her King would demonstrate His power time and time again (cf. Dan. 2:47; 3:28; 4:37; 6:25-27). Finally, He would demonstrate His sovereignty in the restoration of the nation under Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (cf. II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). The "way in the sea" in verses 16 and 17 is a metaphorical allusion to Jehovah's deliverance of the children of Israel through the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses. Just as Jehovah overcame natural obstacles and powerful, wicked human oppressors when He delivered Israel from Egypt, so He will deliver Israel from her captivities under Assyria and Babylon. That mighty Egyptian army with its chariots of war, before which Israel trembled and cringed, lay extinct at the bottom of the Red Sea. So, Jehovah will snuff out the mighty Babylonian empire in one night! (cf. Dan. 5:1-30).

v. 18-21 OPPRESSED DELIVERED: But, as grand and glorious as these great national deliverances are, they are warned they should not let their hopes rest on them. God is going to do a new thing much more glorious. The "new" thing is apparently not just the deliverance from the Babylonian captivity, though that is its starting place. It must be more than that for the deliverance from captivity is not any more glorious than the exodus from Egypt. The "new" thing in itself is the wondrous new redemption accomplished in the death and resurrection of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 42:9-10; 48:6; 62:2; 65:17; 66:22; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; 18:31, for the *new* thing God is going to do in the messianic kingdom). Even "now" it was beginning to be apparent to those who had the faith to see it. The revelations of Ezekiel (40-47) and Daniel (7-12) graphically outlined the mission of Israel as prototypical of the redemption for all mankind from their captivity in sin. Men of faith, like Daniel, recognized that God was already beginning to do this "new" thing. They anxiously desired to know when it would come to its completion (cf. Dan. 12:5f; I Pet. 1:10-12). The

figurative language describing "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert," is a favorite vehicle of prophetic literature to describe the messianic blessedness (cf. Isa. 19:23; 35:1-10; 51:3, etc.). When God shall have finally and fully regenerated men, nature itself shall also be redeemed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). This, too, is a much used expression of the prophets to show that, as Keil and Delitzsch say, "when the sufferings of the people of God shall be brought to an end, the sufferings of creation will also terminate; for humanity is the heart of the universe, and the people of God (understanding by this the people of God according to the Spirit) are the heart of humanity." In other words, the consummation of God's redemptive work will result in the reclamation of men and nature which were cursed in the garden of Eden because of sin. God is working in regenerate men by the power of the gospel received and lived by faith. Regenerated man will then be at harmony with his God, himself and God's creation. At this point, God will redeem his natural creation and create a new heaven and a new earth (II Pet. 3:13). Thus, Paradise will be restored. But it is not the surroundings, the natural environment that is significant. God can make that over by sheer force. He has made man with a free will to choose his own destiny. The remaking of man is all important. Heaven will not be heaven so much for that natural place in which we find ourselves as that nature which is found in us. No better commentary on verse 21 can be found than that in I Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

## QUIZ

1. How did God send to Babylon and bring them down?
2. What is the irony in the prediction of Babylon's fall?
3. Why tell Israel not to remember the former things?
4. What is the "new" thing?

5. Why mention the "beasts" of the field honoring Jehovah?
6. When did Israel finally fulfill its purpose to "set forth" the praise of Jehovah?

#### d. TO BE PERFECTED

TEXT: 43:22-28

- 22 Yet thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.
- 23 Thou hast not brought me of thy sheep for burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not burdened thee with offerings, nor wearied thee with frankincense.
- 24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.
- 25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins.
- 26 Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: set thou forth thy cause, that thou mayest be justified.
- 27 Thy first father sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.
- 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling.

#### QUERIES

- a. Did the people of Israel consider God's offerings a burden?
- b. What is the "sweet cane" they should have bought?
- c. How are they to put God in "remembrance"?

## PARAPHRASE

In spite of all My graciousness in calling you to the honored place of servant of the living God, you have not honored that call by seeking after Me, O Jacob. As a matter of record, you have said, We're tired of Jehovah, and of doing things His way! All the offerings of sheep and all the other sacrifices you have brought are not really because you love Me, but are dedicated to your own self-righteousness. The offerings and sacrifices I commanded in My law were intended to give you a way to express your joy for My grace and goodness to you, never did I think they would be considered insufferable by you. You never did anything special for Me like buying expensive sweet cane to make the sacred incense and anointing oil. You did not drench My altar with the choicest fat of your sacrifices. But you have gone out of your way to load Me down with your insults and rebellions. I am sick and tired of your disobedience. When I blot out your transgressions and forget your sins, it will be for My own sake and out of grace—not from any perfect goodness on your part. Remember who I am. I am God and you receive forgiveness on My terms—not yours. If you think you can justify yourself without My grace, then plead your case! The father of your nation was a sinner, and all those who have been sent to teach you not to sin have sinned. Because of this continual increase in rebellion and sin I will take Israel and her spiritual leaders and profane them in a pagan land. There they will be like outlaws and mocked as fugitives.

## COMMENTS

v. 22-24 TO PRAISE: Israel was called to praise and exalt the name of Jehovah by worshipping Him and keeping His commandments. By worship and obedience to Jehovah's Law, Israel would thus "call" upon Him in faith and show her dependence on His grace. However, Israel did *not* call upon

Him. Israel did not obey Jehovah's Law. Israel considered the Law of Jehovah insufferable, restrictive, boring, and she tired of its discipline, (cf. Isa. 7:13; Jer. 9:5; Micah 6:3; Hab. 3:2; Malachi 2:17, etc.). Israel tired of God as lustful men tire of their wives (Jer. 3:19-20; Hosea 1 & 2; Ezek. 16:1f). The word of the Lord became to Israel an object of scorn (Jer. 6:10, 16). To be sure, Israel had trampled God's courts with multitudes of sacrifices and offerings (Isa. 1:10-17). But, the prophet speaks with sarcasm. Israel was not really bringing all those sacrifices to honor Jehovah. They were doing it to honor themselves. They were more than willing to bring ten thousand offerings as a substitute for putting to practice the Law of God in personal godliness (Micah 6:6-8). They were willing to earn religious merit from sacrifices as long as the Holy One of Israel did not demand moral holiness from them. It was not the number of offerings that burdened the Israelites, it was the moral "strings" attached to a humble relationship of faith and obedience to a Holy God that "wearied" Israel. The astonishing thing is Jehovah's law was always a refreshing, regenerating, pleasurable experience every time Israel obeyed it—individually and nationally (cf. Psalms 119, etc.). Jehovah intended only blessing in His Law (Deut. 28:1f). History proved it!

The "sweet cane" (Heb. *kaneh*) of verse 24 was probably the scented calamus (reed) or some kind of aromatic bark. It was an ingredient of the holy oil (Ex. 30:23); imported from a distance (Jer. 6:20; Ezek. 27:19) and was thus rare and costly. Its sweetness refers to the scent, not the taste. Another Hebrew word in this verse is significant (*kaniythah*) because it is from the same root as the word translated "sweet cane" but means "bought" or "purchased." There appears to be a definite play upon words here emphasizing the preciousness of the offering of cane. *Reviythaniy* is translated "filled" in the same verse but literally means "moisten, satiate," or "drench." The point of this verse is simply this: the people of Israel had not really extended themselves in giving offerings of quality or quantity. They probably skimmed on their offerings much the same as

their descendents did after the return from the captivity (cf. Malachi 1:6-14; 3:6-12, etc.). On the contrary, Israel had gone out of its way to load Jehovah down with its insulting rebellion. The word "burdened" in this verse is from the Hebrew root *'avad* meaning "servile labor." The guiltiness of Israel pressed upon The Holy One of Israel, as a burden does upon a servant. The other word, "wearied," is from the Hebrew root *vaga'* which means literally, "fatigued" or "exhausted." Instead of Israel fulfilling its calling to *praise* Jehovah, it was a *pain* to Him. But the Lord is going to create for Himself an Israel (a new Israel, ruled by His new David) that will fulfill its calling of praise. And He is beginning the work with the prophets and the captivity (cf. Isa. 43:19).

v. 25-28 To PARDON: Jehovah is going to perfect (bring to fruition or completion) from the Israel of Isaiah's day, a *pardoned* Israel. There is a very interesting three-fold repetition of the personal pronoun "I, I, I am," in the Hebrew construction of verse 25, translated "I, even I, am he . . ." It means emphatically that Jehovah *alone* is responsible for any blotting (*makhah*, taking away even down to the very core or marrow) out of transgressions. Jehovah does it exclusively from His own graciousness, for His own name's sake. He does it because of Who He Is—not from any merit of man's person. The rest of the context indicates this is the emphasis. Jehovah wills to pardon man and Jehovah accomplishes man's pardon by His work and Jehovah decrees the terms of acceptance. Man is left free to accept or reject the divinely procured pardon according to man's willingness to obey the divinely decreed terms. One thing is certain; standing before the tribunal of God, no man can claim self-justification. Jehovah warns Israel to "remember" Who He Is! He knows their sins (cf. Amos. 5:12; 5:8; Ezek. 8:12; 9:9, etc.). The first "father" of Israel, Abraham, called "father of the faithful and friend of God," sinned. All the "teachers" (prophets, priests and kings) of Israel sinned (Isa. 53:6; Psa. 14:2-3; 53:3)—all have sinned. Therefore, Jehovah would have to take away

Israel's priests (because they were leading Israel to sin) into captivity. Israel's access to God through its priesthood and its sanctuary would be suspended until she repented. Jacob (Israel) was to be made a "curse" (*kherem* in Hebrew, literally, *devoted* or *banned*, or *outlawed*). Israel was to suffer the *ban* of God and become an outlaw (read Deut. ch. 28:15f), and instead of being respected by vile pagan nations, Israel would be reviled. God called her from the beginning to show forth His wonderful grace and forgiveness through covenant relationship, but she rejected His covenant and His grace. Now she must be "allured" back to pardon in a new covenant relationship, but through "trouble" (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, Hosea 2:14-15, College Press). Israel's pardon will be perfected when she brings forth her Messiah, but she must be prepared for that by chastening.

### QUIZ

1. How did Israel express its weariness of Jehovah?
2. Why did God say He had not wearied them with offerings?
3. How did Israel burden God?
4. Why call Israel to remember Jehovah?
5. What perfection is Jehovah calling Israel to in this section?
6. What curse was placed upon Israel?

### EXAMINATION

#### CHAPTERS FORTY THROUGH FORTY-THREE

#### DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. <i>speak comfortably</i>   | 3. <i>wilderness</i>          |
| 2. <i>voice of one crying</i> | 4. <i>measured the waters</i> |

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. <i>wait</i>         | 11. <i>created</i>       |
| 6. <i>keep silence</i> | 12. <i>formed</i>        |
| 7. <i>worm</i>         | 13. <i>redeemed</i>      |
| 8. <i>servant</i>      | 14. <i>blind or deaf</i> |
| 9. <i>my chosen</i>    | 15. <i>new thing</i>     |
| 10. <i>hear</i>        | 16. <i>sweet cane</i>    |

### MEMORIZATION

The \_\_\_\_\_ of one that crieth, \_\_\_\_\_ ye in the wilderness the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jehovah; make level in the \_\_\_\_\_ a highway for our God. Every \_\_\_\_\_ shall be exalted, and every \_\_\_\_\_ and hill shall be made \_\_\_\_\_; and the uneven shall be made \_\_\_\_\_, and the rough places a plain: and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all \_\_\_\_\_ shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. (40:3-5)

### EXPLANATION

1. Explain the connection between man's strengthening and Isaiah's focus on the nature of Jehovah.
2. Explain why men find such fascination with idols and images.
3. Explain Isaiah's command that the "islands" keep "silent."
4. Explain why the Servant who will not cry or lift up his voice was such a contrast in character to the common Jewish concept of Jehovah's Servant.
5. Explain who the servant of Jehovah is who comes from the "north."
6. Explain Isaiah's use of three different servants in these chapters.



## APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Why do we need applied to our lives Isaiah's teaching on the transcendence or independence of God?
2. May we use Isaiah's repeated references to the wonders of creation in any application for today's world?
3. What application of Israel's servanthood to God can we make in the church's relationship to Christ today?
4. Is there an application (besides the fulfillment of prophecy) for us in the task God gave to the prophet when He said, "comfort ye my people"?
5. May we learn from the symptoms of unbelief in the people of Isaiah's day, something to be applied to the society in which we live?
6. Does God still use men and natural forces as His agents in history today? Can we apply principles to understand history today from the inspired revelation of history in Isaiah's day?
7. Is there some application that may be made about religious music from this section of Isaiah (esp. 42:10-17)?

## B. POWER OF THE LORD'S SERVANT CHAPTERS 44-49

### 1. SOVEREIGN OVER ALL GODS, CHAPTER 44

#### a. SHOWS FAVOR TO THE FAITHFUL

TEXT: 44:1-8

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

- 2 thus saith Jehovah that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, who will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
- 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:
- 4 and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses.
- 5 One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname himself by the name of Israel.
- 6 Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God.
- 7 And who, as I, shall call and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I established the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass, let them declare.
- 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have I not declared unto thee of old, and showed it? and ye are my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is "Jeshurun"?
- b. When is this promise of the Spirit to be fulfilled?
- c. Why the different names in verse five?

### PARAPHRASE

Although chastisement is sure to come to you, O Jacob my servant, I want you to know I called you Israel because I have chosen you for something better which will surely result from your chastening if you will listen and obey Me. First of all,

remember, I, Jehovah, created you as a nation; your birth as a people was My doing. Surely you know I will help you. Do not be afraid Jacob my servant, Jeshurun, my chosen, for your offspring who are faithful and the messianic seed among you will have My Spirit poured out upon them and they will spring up and grow a harvest like the dry ground produces when streams of water are poured upon it. They will thrive like the abundant grass and trees that grow by the river banks. One by one they will proclaim that they belong to Jehovah. Some will bear witness that they belong to Jehovah by writing it down, counting it an honor to be called "Jehovah's." Secondly, need I remind you that I am the King of Israel; I am Israel's Redeemer; I am Jehovah, Lord of all the heavenly hosts; I am before all that begins and after all that ends—First and Last; there is no other God besides Me. If there is any man or god like Me, let him stand forth and declare it and prove his claim by ordering the course of history like I have from the very beginning. If there is anyone like Me let him prove it by predicting what will happen in the future. No, Israel, you have nothing to fear from these others who claim they are gods and have omnipotent power. I have proved to you long ago that I am the only God there is haven't I? By the prophecies I have declared and their fulfillments which you have experienced, you are witnesses to the fact that I am the only God. Is there any other God? No! None that I know about! There is no other Rock!

## COMMENTS

v. 1-5 INVIGORATES: Although the chastening judgment of Jehovah is predicted with absolute certainty (chapter 43) upon Israel, still Israel is the chosen of the Lord. They were not even a nation when God chose them. He took them as nomadic shepherders and formed them as an instrument of His from nothing! God molded them from useless clay into a vessel for His purpose (cf. Rom. 9:19f). They should surely know that

God desired with all His heart to help them and favor them. But God could not help them become the vessel they were chosen to be because they did *not want* to be that vessel! The Lord knew, and predicted through His prophet here, there would be a remnant formed from the chastening captivity which would believe and surrender to its chosen purpose. This remnant, even now being formed by Isaiah's preaching, need not fear the impending judgment. God's purpose will survive through this remnant called Jeshurun (the name means: right, upright, esteemed, righteous). The prophet suddenly makes a dramatic shortening of perspective in verse three. From the promise of help to the remnant of Israel formed from the chastening captivity Isaiah focuses his prophetic telescope down on the time when God will "pour my Spirit upon thy seed . . . and thine offspring." God's redemptive purpose will be accomplished ultimately in the "seed" and "offspring" of Israel. What is this pouring out of the Spirit? Is it the special, miraculous Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost (cf. Joel 2:28f; Acts 2:14f), or is it the promise of the Holy Spirit to all obedient believers (Isa. 32:14; Acts 2:38-39)? Isaiah could be making a general prophecy in which both were intended since without the miraculous revelation of the gospel covenant terms of salvation through the Spirit to the apostles there could have been no indwelling presence of the Spirit. Whatever the case, we feel certain Isaiah's prophecy of the Spirit here is intended to be fulfilled in the new covenant believer. Christ is the "seed" and "offspring" (cf. Gal. 3:15-29) and Christians are "offspring" by being in Him. So, Isaiah has skipped from the Captivity to the New Covenant without any mention of the centuries between. Keil and Delitzsch think "the threefold *zeh*" (demonstrative pronoun) (*one . . . another . . . another*) indicates verse five is speaking of the heathen (cf. Psalms 87:4-5). Gentiles will take pride in belonging to Jehovah. They will confess their allegiance orally and *yiketov* (from *kathav*, to subscribe) in writing. The emphatic willingness of the Gentile to allow himself to be "surnamed" Israel is an astounding prophecy in view of the contempt most of the heathen world had for the

Hebrew and his God. Nothing short of conversion and rebirth could fulfill this prophecy!

v. 6-8 INFORMS: Man thinks in terms of beginnings and endings. Timelessness is outside man's experience. God condescends to man's limited experience and calls Himself, the first, and the last. When time began, God was already there; when time shall end, God will still be there. Many heathen people claimed such eternal existence for their gods, but they could not prove it. Jehovah demonstrated His eternal deity, not only in the things He made (cf. Rom. 1:18f), but also in the predictions and revelations He gave through His prophets. Jehovah challenged and defeated scores of false prophets and false priests (scoffers of the days of Noah; magicians of Pharaoh in Moses' day; false prophets of Baal in the days of Elijah; the witch of Endor in King Saul's day; the false prophet Hananiah in Jeremiah's day). None of these were able to meet the challenge of Jehovah. In every instance Jehovah demonstrated that only He has absolute knowledge and power. Now, Isaiah is emphatically reminding his generation that as the Lord's servant the power of Almighty God is available to them in the supernatural revelation of Jehovah through His prophets. He knows their future and their destiny—they do not need to be afraid—they simply need to trust Him. Has He not from of old proven His omniscience? And are they not witnesses to it? There is no other god they need to fear.

### QUIZ

1. Who is the seed and offspring of verse three?
2. Why is the prediction of verse five such an astounding one?
3. When had God proved He was the only God?
4. Why should Israel not be afraid?

## b. SHOWS THE FRAUDULENCE OF FALSE GODS

TEXT: 44:9-20

- 9 They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be put to shame.
- 10 Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing?
- 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together.
- 12 The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint.
- 13 The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house.
- 14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm-tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it.
- 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
- 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:
- 17 and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

- 18 They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.
- 19 And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?
- 20 He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

### QUERIES

- a. Why the question of verse ten?
- b. Why the detailed description of the work?
- c. How have their eyes been shut?

### PARAPHRASE

Those who carve out graven images and call them gods are all fools. These idols which they are so proud of are worthless. All those who make testimonies to idols are as dumb as the idols because they have blinded themselves to the truth about their gods. Who but a fool would create something with his own hands and call it a god when he knows it cannot be greater than himself. All those who join with this fool who has made his own god will also be shown to be fools. Yes, and included in this group of fools are the workmen who manufactured the idol—they stand right alongside the other fools. The foolishness of the making of idols is seen in the exhaustive amounts of energy craftsmen waste in manufacturing gods which cannot see or know. The iron-smith has had to first make his tools to work the metal which covers the wooden image. Then he

uses these tools, working long, hard, exhaustive hours working and reworking the metal. He foolishly works himself so long over the forge he gets weak and almost faints. Before he wastes this much energy, the carpenter has gone to great lengths to sketch the image on a block of wood, shape it with his tools, sketch some more, work it some more, and what does he end up with—something in the image of man. Even if it is in the image of the most masculine of men, it is still a man-image and then it is put into a man-made temple. But before the carpenter has wasted all his energies in producing the mere image of a man to call his god, the woodsman has wasted time, energy and money planting trees, cultivating them, selecting just the right one. Then he cuts it down and half of it may be used to make an idol and half of it may be used to fire an oven for cooking meals. Yes, as stupid as it may sound, a man will take a tree and with half of it he will build a fire and warm himself and cook his meals and with the other half of it he will carve himself an image of man and fall down before it and worship it. Incredible as it may sound, a man takes half a tree and builds a fire, cooks his meal, stands right there in front of the fire and says, 'Oh, that feels good, I feel that heat warming me; then, with what is left of that same tree, he carves an idol and falls down and worships, praying to it, Deliver me, oh my god! Such idiocy—they act like they do not have any brains at all. Apparently they have never reflected a moment on how stupid such an action is! They have plastered shut their own eyes so they cannot see and they have plastered shut their hearts so they cannot understand. These fools never stop to really think all this out with any perception. They never reason this way: Now, part of this tree I have burned in the fire and cooked my meal on! Does it make sense to take the other half of a piece of fuel and make it into something as deprecating and shaming to good sense as an idol? They never stop to think: Shall I, a living, thinking, feeling being, fall down to a chunk of wood and call it a god? The fool who makes idols, so easily reduced to ashes, has been deluded by his own choice. He really does not want spiritual



deliverance and so finds none and it never occurs to him to say, Isn't this all a big lie?

## COMMENTS

v. 9-17 GRAVEN IMAGES: There are a number of Hebrew words for *idol*; *'alilim* (a thing of nought); *atsabbim* (an image of grief); *gilulim* (a filthy image); *tsirim* (images of stone); *teraphim* (images) and others. The word used in verse nine is *pesel* which means specifically "graven thing" or sculpture. The object of the *pesel* or sculpture was to make some material into a representation of the invisible God to be worshipped and thus it was an idol. The word translated *delight* is also interesting; it is *hkamudyehem* which means *desirable, delectable, precious, darling*. Their graven images were more than ornaments! They venerated, pampered and worshiped those pieces of stone and chunks of wood much like the ignorant masses of India worship cows and the Buddhists of Japan worship statues of bronze and gold.

Isaiah is shaming the foolishness of the people who make and worship idols as much as he is the idols themselves! Those who make them are *tohu*, "void, empty, vain" people. Their "witnesses" is reference to the idolaters who are the only witnesses the idols could have. The idols are dumb and so are those idolaters (the people) who testify to them. It must have taken a great deal of courage for Isaiah to make such scathing public rebuke of idolatry. It had been instigated and approved by Ahaz and was practiced by the majority of the population. The prophet presents a sarcastic question: Who but a fool would fashion something with his own hands and call it a god when it cannot ever be more than it is—a piece of wood or stone? In verse 11 Isaiah offers both a prediction and a challenge. He predicts that idolaters will someday be acknowledged as the fools they really are. His prediction has come true. Idolatry stands discredited as utter folly in most of the world today. The discrediting of idolatry is due fundamentally

to Christianity, not science! Science is due to Christianity! Isaiah challenges that if all the idolaters and idols could be gathered together in one great mass meeting to substantiate the truthfulness of idols, they could present no evidence or verification. Their images would still remain dumb, unable to speak, hear or see and unable to deliver, save or act at all!

Our author now begins (v. 12-17) one of the most satirical, comical passages of the Bible! This is the graphic, ludicrous picture of the idol-smith as seen from God's perspective. We must understand that most idols were composites of wood and metal. First, a wooden image was carved with the desired features. Then molten metal (gold, silver, bronze, etc.) was poured over the wooden image and the metal is then polished and worked again into the desired product. All this craftsmanship required proper tools and so Isaiah begins his picture describing the hot, exhausting, famishing work invested by human beings in just the tools to make idols. All that human energy to make tools to make something that is nothing! Then the craftsman *hkarash* (*artificer, engraver*, probably from the root, *to scratch*), spends long hours sketching, measuring, shaping, remeasuring, shaping again and the end product is the image of a man! Perhaps it would be the most masculine man with the most perfect features the craftsman could fashion, but still the image of man. Water cannot rise above its level. So, the human cannot produce the divine—not even an *image* of the divine! And the *image* of man is not alive. It is only an image of the features of man—not man! Most idols are much more decadent than that because they are images of beasts and creeping things!

The prophet has described the process of idol-making in reverse order. In verses 14-17 he describes the initial steps in the formation of a graven image. Even before the craftsmen begin there is much human energy exerted on a project of "nothingness." The woodsman must spend time deciding on the proper tree (only the best will do for one's god). Then much energy and time is invested in hewing down the tree, sectioning it and hauling it to the craftsman. But before all this

long years of time has been invested in planting, nourishing and protecting the sapling until it was time to harvest it for idol-making. The destiny and existence of this "god" was totally dependent upon the circumstances of weather and growth and man's whims of selection and harvesting it should appear absolutely idiotic to think the thing formed was a "god"! But that isn't all! After planting a sprout, watching it grow into a sapling, then a tree, then taking all the pains to select, harvest, transport, and sell to the craftsman, one watches as the craftsman takes half of the log for a "god" and casts the other half aside for cook-wood! How utterly incredible! Out of the same log a man makes a god and fuels a fire to cook his meal or warm his body! What supernatural guidance did the craftsman use to decide from which half to make a god and which to burn in the fire? Why couldn't the half in the fire have made a god equally as well as the other half? There is an interesting use of the word *raiyth* from the root *raah* to see. The Hebrews used *see* often to mean *feel*, *experience*. The idea is the contrast between *feeling* the warmth of the fire made by the same wood the man falls down before to worship as a god! How senseless! He has just felt the warmth from the fire of the wood and now he cries out, Deliver me, to part of the same wood! How can men and women be so stupid?

v. 18-20 GULLIBLE IDOLATERS: Lange says the *tahk* (shut, plaster shut) of verse 18 should be considered as the nominal form and take as its nearest qualification the word *'aeyneyhem* which is 3 pers. pl. masc. In other words, *they* plastered their eyes shut—not God. It is apparent from the context that the idolater exercised his own choice in knowing or not knowing the utter stupidity of idolatry. The Hebrew *lo-yashyiv el-libbo* means literally, "carry not back into the heart," and is translated in the ASV "none calleth to mind." Evidently these idolaters once had understanding about the vanity of idols, but they did not "carry it back into their hearts." They rejected any willing reflection or investigation of their practices. They refused to come to the light lest their deeds be exposed (cf. Jn. 3:18-20). It certainly was not because they were incapable

of understanding the stupidity of their practice—they simply did not want to “carry it back into their minds.” *To'evah* is “an abhorrence” or an “abomination.” Its evaluation comes from God, not from man. Men who make them think them darling—God calls them abominations! Idols insult God and degrade and eventually destroy men whom God made in His own image.

The man who makes idols of wood and metal which are so easily reduced to ashes has been led astray from truth by a heart overpowered with self-delusion and cannot be saved nor does it ever occur to him to say, Isn't all this a big lie? The most enslaving delusion is self-delusion, because it has to do with selfish feelings—not objective truth. There does not seem to be any hope for these idolaters of Isaiah's people unless they are willing to investigate what is outside their own feelings and desires. As long as men accept only what agrees with their feelings and desires, and are unwilling to accept that something may be valid truth outside their own autonomous selves, they cannot be saved. God is transcendent. He is the objective Object. He is the eternal Person. He is truth, outside of and beyond man. His being, objectivity and truthfulness must be validated by His revelation of Himself. Man cannot reduce Him to man's limited experience for man can rise no higher than himself (as evidenced by his idols)!

## QUIZ

1. What is a “graven image”?
2. How would you characterize Isaiah's mood in this dissertation against idol-making?
3. What is a “carpenter”?
4. How does the idol-maker “see” the fire?
5. What is the meaning of “none calleth to mind”?
6. Why is the idol-maker unable to evaluate idolatry as a lie?

c. SHOWS THE FRUSTRATION OF FOOLISH COUNSEL

TEXT: 44:21-28

- 21 Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have found thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.
- 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.
- 23 Sing, O Ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel.
- 24 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone: that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?);
- 25 that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;
- 26 that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof;
- 27 that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers;
- 28 that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

QUERIES

- a. What "things" are to be "remembered" by Israel?
- b. Who are the "liars" of verse 25?
- c. Why mention Cyrus again?

## PARAPHRASE

As you contemplate the idiocy of idolatry, remember the following things too, O Jacob, and Israel. First, you are mine. I chose you and I created you as a people, to be My servant in a divine destiny. Second, I could never forget you Israel, for it was I who blotted out your transgressions and sins. You must return to Me and never forget Me, Israel, for I purchase you with the price of redemption. Indeed, your redemption is so glorious it involves the heavens, mountains, and the forests. The whole universe will sing and shout Jehovah's praise. Jehovah's redemption of Israel will, in its completion, redound to His glory in Israel. This is what Jehovah, your Redeemer and Progenitor says: I am Jehovah-the-Faithful. I am Jehovah, Creator of all things. I alone formed the heavens and the earth. Who could say they helped Me? I frustrate the fulfillments of the false prophets and expose them as liars and make the soothsayers appear to be mad men. I refute the wisdom of unbelieving counselors and demonstrate it to be foolishness. But when My servants, the prophets, predict that Jerusalem shall be inhabited and the cities of Judah shall be built and that the waste places shall be populated, I make their predictions come to pass! When I say to what opposes My redemptive people, Be gone! it shall be gone! And when I say Cyrus shall be My shepherd to fulfill My purposes by giving permission for the building of Jerusalem and the Temple, that is exactly what shall come to pass.

## COMMENTS

v. 21-23 FORGIVENESS IS IN JEHOVAH: The message of this section is that Israel is to *remember* (Heb. *zekar*) who Jehovah is. We remind the reader, this is the very essence of biblical religion—the realization of the objective Personhood of God. Biblical religion is not how man feels, but what man acknowledges about who God is and what God has said. Especially

Israel is admonished to remember who Jehovah is in view of the foregoing expose of the idiocy of idolatry. All men are vulnerable to idolatry if they do not acknowledge the objective reality of the eternal, supernatural Personhood of Jehovah. Men must have a god. He will make one of wood or stone, of science or government, of fame or fortune—or even of himself. Israel must remember that Jehovah chose her and created her for Himself. He evidenced His special claim upon her in ages past by miraculous powers of deliverance, sustenance, subjugations and revelations. He demonstrated that He was a living God, capable and willing to guide and guard Israel over thousands of years. He never forgot her!

The blotting out of Israel's sin is apparently in promise here. We know from the New Testament that the actual, historical event which blotted out sin and *accomplished* redemption was the atoning death of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 10:1-18). The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. The Hebrew who offered his sacrificial lamb lived in faith that God would, someday, accomplish the act which would atone for his sins and thus fulfill His promises. The point being stressed in verse 22 is willingness and mercifulness of God in promising to blot out Israel's sin and offering her, even then, a way to believe in that promise. The redemption spoken of in verses 22 and 23 cannot refer to the return from the exile, for there was no permanence to that. The Hebrew word *goal* is repeated in this text and it implies more than forgiveness of sins; it implies that a price has been paid to purchase Israel. That price was God's dear Son on Calvary. Certainly, the redemptive plan included God's deliverance of Israel from her captivity so she might bring forth the Suffering Servant. And this is exactly what Israel needed to *remember* now—her redemptive servanthood. She needed to remember that God had called her and promised her (in type and prophecy) redemption. God's promises are as good as done! God can direct His prophets to predict the future as if it were accomplished!

All nature is bound up with the destiny of mankind. When man sinned, God cursed nature so man would not, in his sinful

state, fall in love with this earth. When Christ died on the cross suffering the curse upon man and earning man's redemption, He also suffered the curse upon nature and earned nature's redemption. Therefore, in view of the certainty of God's redemption of Israel, all of God's creation can rejoice and sing and shout because all of God's creation is equally certain of its redemption. The true Israel of God is destined for dominion over a redeemed and recreated Eden (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 2:5-9; II Pet. 3:13). Israel must remember that and repent of idolatry!

v. 24-28 FAITHFULNESS IS IN JEHOVAH: Another aspect of Jehovah's nature Israel is to *remember* is His absolute faithfulness. He alone is sovereign. He alone knows the future. He alone speaks and it comes to pass. Who dares challenge His claim that He created everything? Who can bring forth evidence to dispute His claim? Job learned a lesson he probably never forgot (Job 38-40) about challenging the sovereign wisdom of God. Many alleged "scientific" explanations of the formation of the universe are posited today but they are moral evasions, not verifiable scientific demonstrations.

Jehovah demonstrates His omnipotence and omniscience over and over again by frustrating the alleged "signs" of the liars (Heb. *baddim*, feigners, fakers, false prophets). The Lord may expose the false prophet immediately or He may take a long time to do so, but eventually the false prophet is exposed and the Lord's Word is vindicated. Isaiah was one of those prophets of the Lord whose word was confirmed publicly (cf. Isa. 36-38). Jeremiah (Jer. 28:5-17) was another! The list goes on and on. The Lord is still frustrating the fakers and confirming the veracity of His Word today! But this text is directed especially to Israel. She must remind herself of God's omniscience and not listen to the oracles of the idolatrous false-prophets. When God says Jerusalem would be inhabited and the cities of Judah (although many of them had been made desolate by the Assyrian armies) would be built, Isaiah's contemporaries must believe it will surely come to pass. Ultimately, Jehovah is going to confound the wisdom of the wise in His



Suffering Servant. God will use the "Foolishness" of the cross to save those who believe (I Cor. 1:18f). The idea of a crucified Messiah was utterly foreign to the Jewish concept. Isaiah predicted that (Isa. 53:1-9)! Peter confirms the Jewish revulsion at the concept of a dying Messiah (cf. Mt. 16:21-23, etc.). The total absence of any specific reference to a personal, dying Messiah in the Jewish apocrypha confirms this.

The point of these verses is the way in which Jehovah confirms His sovereign will. He confounds and frustrates the vain predictions and philosophies of men and fulfills the predictions of His commissioned prophets. Many said Jehovah's program to redeem mankind and form a redeemed people on earth would not survive. Great empires and powerful emperors opposed it. They overran Jerusalem, tore down His temple and slaughtered His people, but God preserved a remnant through the centuries. Out of that remnant (Jerusalem and Judah) God produced Jesus Christ and His church. No river was "deep" enough to stop God from keeping His promise of redemption. No empire was large enough, cruel enough, rich enough to keep God from preserving those who remained faithful to Him. God was able even to use Cyrus, a pagan ruler of Persia, to "shepherd" His people and send them back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. God used Nebuchadnezzar and many others to fulfill His purposes (cf. our comments in *Daniel*, College Press, chapters 7-12). We will have much more to say of Cyrus in the next chapter.

Israel is to renew its divine destiny as the servant of Jehovah on the basis of Jehovah's faithfulness. Jehovah will keep His promises, and no amount of opposition will stand in His way. As a matter of fact, Jehovah will use His opposition as servants and shepherds to carry out His plan. Israel is more than a conqueror through Him who loves her! The church must daily renew its divine destiny as God's Zion in the world today on the basis of Christ's faithfulness to keep His promises. Let the church focus its preaching on the nature of Christ—who He is and what He promises, and this will build the kingdom of God. Man has many questions, but Jesus cuts through all

## ISAIAH

our irrelevancies and goes to the very heart of our problem when He asks, "Whom do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15). For in this question He asks for conviction, confession and commitment to the only thing that matters—the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Once that is settled, all else falls into proper place.

## QUIZ

1. Why is it important to remember *who* God is?
2. How was Israel's sin blotted out?
3. Why is God able to direct His prophets to predict the future as if it were already accomplished?
4. Why direct the heavens to sing?
5. How does God frustrate the signs of the liars?
6. In what or whom did God ultimately confound the wisdom of the wise?

## SPECIAL STUDY

### THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

John 1:18

by Paul T. Butler

## INTRODUCTION

### I. THE POSSIBILITY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

A. Once established from Theism (natural revelation) that God exists and that He is the Uncaused, First Cause, with eternal power and deity (Rom. 1:20), the Purposing Designer of the universe—

1. then unless that which He created is greater than He . . . and
2. unless the laws He created are greater than the Lawgiver . . .

## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

3. There is no escaping the conclusion that He can, if He wishes, intervene in the universe to reveal Himself, to accomplish His omnipotent will and purpose.
- B. Uniformitarianism (dogma of the so-called "immutable laws of nature") does not preclude the possibility of supernatural intervention
  1. The "uniformity of nature" is not a force, it is a mere abstract designation of the force that is observed to be working.
  2. Both Heisenberg's principle of "indeterminacy" and Einstein's principle of relativity show that natural law is not "immutable."
  3. The absolute uniformity of nature depends upon human *observation of all time and all experience*—human observation has not been long enough into the past to say that these laws have always acted uniformly—nor can human observation say with any absoluteness what these laws will do in the immediate future!
  4. The question whether God has revealed Himself or not must be decided on the basis of evidence. Is there any evidence of supernatural intervention or revelation?

## II. THE PROBABILITY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

- A. Would God create man and leave him all alone? All reason cries NO!
  1. A man given a free will might do things contrary to the will of his Creator and be in danger, so the Creator would want to warn the creature.
  2. The Creator is a Being of Purpose. There must be some purpose for man. There is no way for man to find the Purposer's purpose for him unless the Purposer tells it!
- B. All religions, however pagan, have some form of revelation from their gods. Where did this idea of the higher being revealing himself come from if God did not

put it there and if such a revelation had not, in fact, occurred?

### III. THE PROGRAM OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF

- A. In History (events and deeds)
- B. In Words (directly and through human agents in human language)
- C. In Person (Jesus Christ)

## DISCUSSION

### I. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN HISTORY—IN EVENTS, DEEDS OR IN NATURE

- A. In Acts 14:15-18, Paul told the citizens of pagan Lystra that the Creator-God "*did not leave himself without witness*, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons . . ."
- B. In Acts 17:22-30, Paul told the Athenian philosophers that what they and their poets had been led (by a revelation they had of God through nature and reason) to worship was a Person, not a thing of stone or wood. The Athenians should have known this and deduced it from the nature of their own being!
- C. In Romans 1:19-20, Paul writes that the Gentiles had a revelation of the wrath, the eternal power and deity of God in that which had been created (nature); cf. Psalms 19:1-4.
- D. God has revealed Himself through supernatural events (we call them miracles) which have taken place historically. Such events cannot be explained as natural phenomena (parting of the Red Sea; Noachian Flood, etc.) except by men who choose to deliberately ignore the facts (cf. II Pet. 3:5).
  - 1. As a result of such supernatural events, having been

## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

empirically demonstrated, God expects man to reason to the Uncaused Cause (cf. Ex. 14:10-18; Psalms 44:1-3; 67:7-10; 78:1-72; 105:1ff; 106:1ff; 136:1ff).

2. Compare these references also: Dan. 4:34-37; Heb. 2:2-4; Jn. 5:19-23; 10:31-39; 14:8-11.

- E. Some still refuse to admit, even in the face of demonstrable, historical evidence, that miracles have occurred. C. S. Lewis puts it this way in "Miracles" . . . "Because such an admission would force them to admit there is a living God! Men exclude miracles from the realm of possibility today because in so doing they fashion for themselves a God who would not do miracles, or indeed anything else. Men are reluctant to pass over from the notion of an abstract and negative deity to the living God. An abstract and negative deity does nothing, demands nothing. He is there if you wish for Him, like a book on a shelf. He will not pursue you. It is with a shock that we discover a "living God." You have had a shock like that before, in connection with smaller matters—when the line pulls at your hand, when something breathes beside you in the darkness. So here; the shock comes at the precise moment when the thrill of *life* is communicated to us along the clue we have been following. It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. 'Look out,' we cry, 'it's alive!' An impersonal God—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. BUT GOD HIMSELF, ALIVE, PULLING AT THE OTHER END OF THE CORD, PERHAPS APPROACHING AT AN INFINITE SPEED, THE HUNTER, KING, HUSBAND, THAT IS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER! There comes a moment when the children who have been playing cops and robbers hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ('Man's search for God') suddenly draw back. Supposing we

really found Him? We never meant it to come to *that*! Worse still, supposing He had found us?"

THIS IS WHY PEOPLE DENY THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF HISTORICALLY IN EMPIRICALLY WITNESSED DEEDS . . . OR PERSONALLY IN JESUS CHRIST . . . HE IS, THEN, THE LIVING GOD!

## II. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN WORDS—IN HUMAN LANGUAGE

### A. A verbal revelation is necessary

1. Some historical events lend themselves to interpretation by the innate capabilities of the mind of man alone (Rom. 1, etc.)
2. Most events, however, must be interpreted by God to man in a verbal communication if man is to understand their revelatory nature.
3. Revelation then consists of event and interpretation. God acts in history and discloses by words the meaning of His acts.
4. The interpretation of the prophets, of Jesus Christ and of the apostles of what God has done in History is itself a part of the revelatory situation.
5. God communicated in words to Adam even before Eve was created (Gen. 2:15-17)—God gave Adam the ability to use language and name the animals before Eve was created (Gen. 2:20).

### B. The nature of language as a medium of revelation

1. Written words have the same validity as the actual words of the speaker and this is shown by the fact that written words are admissible as evidence in a court of law, carrying the same weight as those of a living and present witness.
2. Speech, as defined by Wm. J. Martin, "is the act by which the speaker provides with perceptible garments the invisible offspring (thoughts) of his mind."
3. Language makes the communication of thoughts possible by providing verbal "deputies" for the

## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

ingredients of many situations.

4. By language it is possible also for a speaker to superimpose his will on another, and thus it becomes possible for the Holy Spirit to superimpose His will upon us and within us through a verbal revelation.
  5. Language makes possible even the communication of inaccessible matter (the supernatural wisdom and plan of God, which would be inaccessible if He did not speak it to us in language).
  6. Language is necessary even for the mind of man to communicate with itself, for the mind is never completely happy until it has reduced its problems to linguistic terms.
- C. Existential theology denies that God can or will reveal Himself propositionally (that is, they affirm that God does not reveal Himself verbally, through words, but by direct confrontation, subjectively) — BUT
1. We cannot have the knowledge of God without the knowledge *about* God!! anymore than we can have a knowledge of our wives or children without a knowledge *about* them!
  2. We cannot claim the transcendent experience, the oneness of the soul with God, without the truth that God gives of Himself in the saving events of history, the truth of which comes to us by historical media.
  3. Christian faith is not hung on a sky-hook but is founded securely in fact. One senses that the writers of the N.T. were terribly empirically minded. The fact-basis of faith is everywhere apparent in Scripture.
  4. Faith without truth is impossible! and that truth is not some ether that haunts the atmosphere or the brain but something that is the function of statements and that grasps us when there is conveyed that which is actually the case.
  5. To be personal means to be a self, a rational self, a moral self, and a purposing self. Man is both intellectual and moral. The one cannot be separated from

the other. Response to the truth is moral as well as intellectual. Therefore there must be propositional truth in verbal form before there can be either an intellectual or moral confrontation with God!!

6. Confrontation involves the meeting of minds, of common response to one another—in the truth. The confrontation of persons involves the communication of truth. Truth is a function of language!

#### D. Language and Personal Encounter

1. Events (nature, history) cannot bring about the personal encounter which the genius of language alone can accomplish.
2. By means of the sense of hearing, as the receiver of verbal communication, one mind can make contact with the mental world of another mind and can influence that inaccessible and mysterious realm of thought.
3. Further, with the voluntary cooperation of the recipient, one may learn in turn something about the contents of that other mind.
4. Without such voluntary cooperation and without communication THERE IS AN IMPENETRABLE BOUNDARY TO PERSONAL ENCOUNTER . . . this is exactly what Paul says in I Cor. 2:11 . . . "For what person knows a man's thought except the spirit of the man which is in him?" The mind of the man sitting next to you may be quite inaccessible to you, while at that very moment a friend a 1000 miles away may be allowing you, by means of a letter, to learn something of what is beyond this boundary . . . the act of crossing this boundary is one of the most remarkable phenomena of our experience.
5. If God willed to cross this boundary, He could surely do so by the existing means so extensively used between man and man. This is what the Psalmist infers in Psal. 94:8ff . . . If God made the eye, He can see . . ."  
AND IF GOD MADE THE TONGUE, HE CAN TALK!



## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

- E. The Bible leaves us in no doubt whatever that the vehicle of revelation is language (words).
1. Language is versatile: it is unique in the reception and transmission of knowledge; it is the only means which possesses such potentiality.
  2. Mystical communication, in which the intellect is in abeyance and the object of the participant is to merge himself by a non-verbal process in the Godhead, is excluded by a word often on the lips of the writers of the O.T. The word is translated "to hear," and signifies not only to hear, but "to understand" and even "to respond" to what is said.
  3. There are literally thousands of references in both O.T. and N.T. representing God as "speaking" words (cf. Ex. 20:1; Deut. 1:6; Psalms. 33:9; Jer. 7:13; 14:14; Jn. 6:63; Mt. 24:35; Jn. 17:14, 17).
  4. Language is the only conceivable means of communicating non-empirical places, things or concepts (heaven, hell, remission of sins). It has the ability to cross dimensional limits of time, space, etc., and communicate by verbal deputies (figures of speech, analogies, etc.) the non-experienceable. It has the ability to bring about PERSONAL ENCOUNTER, I Cor. 2:13.
  5. Yet language is inadequate to describe the ultimate realities of such things as heaven, hell, etc. ON THE OTHER HAND, INADEQUACY DOES NOT MEAN ERRONEOUSNESS. Paul was "caught up into the third heaven and heard things it was impossible for him to utter." (II Cor. 12:1-4) We do not believe the book of Revelation's description of heaven is in any ultimate sense, adequate, yet it is adequate enough in its relative sense to engender love, faith and purpose in the believer's heart.

## III. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN A PERSON, HIS UNIQUE SON, JESUS CHRIST

A. Because God is personal, the final revelation of Himself was a Person.

1. Heb. 1:1-4, In times past God revealed Himself in many ways, and through many servants (prophets), but in the last dispensation He has revealed Himself in the Son. This Son is: Heir, Co-Creator, Glory of God, Express Image of His Person, Sustainer, Majesty on High.

2. John 1:1-18, The Third Person of the God-head became Incarnate and "tabernacled" among men. Men beheld His glory as of the only unique Son from the face-to-face presence with the Father. No man has seen God at any time, but the Son has declared Him (exegesatos) "exegeted" Him.

3. Phil. 2:5-10, God took upon Himself the form of a man and suffered the death of the cross, revealing the love of God.

4. II Cor. 5:19, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

5. Heb. 10:4-10, He came in a body prepared for Him to do the will of God willingly, and by that will we are sanctified.

6. His name is Immanuel ("God with us"), Matt. 1:23.

B. The Son of God became Incarnate and *acted* in history and *spoke* exactly and exclusively the very words God willed Him to speak!! Luke says his gospel document is a "treatise . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach . . ." Acts 1:1.

1. Jesus lived and taught the love of God perfectly.

2. Jesus lived and taught the compassion of God perfectly.

3. Jesus lived and taught the righteousness of God perfectly.

C. The most important statement of Jesus concerning His personal revelation of the Father is found in John 14:7-11.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my

## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

## CONCLUSION

### I. PERSONAL REVELATION INVOLVES DECISION, RESPONSE TO THE PERSONAL GOD

- A. God meets man in the act of revelation not as an Idea, an Unmoved Mover, but as a PERSON who speaks to man and requires a response from man.
- B. To say that revelation is historical, verbal and personal means, in brief, that God has come into our midst and because He has so come, we can never remain the same as we were before.

### II. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD IN THE FLESH, "HEAR YE HIM!"

- A. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9
- B. Do you want to know what God thinks? Read the words of Jesus and the apostles.
- C. Do you want to know how God acts? Look at the life Jesus lived.
- D. Do you want to know what God thinks of man? Read the Bible.

- E. Do you want to know what God promises to men of faith and obedience? Read the New Testament!
- F. Do you want to know what God commands man to do? Read the New Testament!

### III. AT THE END OF THIS AGE GOD IS GOING TO REVEAL HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN

- A. Historically, Verbally, Personally
- B. I Thess. 4:16ff; II Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:13; I Jn. 3:1-3; Jn. 14:1-6; Acts 1:9-11

### IV. WHAT IS YOUR DECISION? GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO YOU PERSONALLY, VERBALLY, YOU HAVE HAD A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD HERE, NOW!

HIS PERSONAL INVITATION TO YOU IS COME, RECEIVE, OBEY, TRUST.

THE BIBLE IS HIS LOVE LETTER TO YOU.

## 2. SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION, CHAPTER 45

### a. OMNIPOTENCE

TEXT: 45:1-8

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut:
- 2 I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron;
- 3 and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel.
- 4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou

hast not known me.

5 I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me;

6 that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.

8 Distil, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, that it may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up together; I Jehovah have created it.

### QUERIES

- a. How will Jehovah loose the loins of kings before Cyrus?
- b. Why did God surname Cyrus for Jacob's sake?
- c. How may the "skies pour down righteousness"?

### PARAPHRASE

This is what Jehovah says to Cyrus the man He has especially chosen and whose career of conquest and government Jehovah will guide and sustain. The Lord will subdue great world powers and strip emperors of their strength for him; He will open city gates and no one will be able to shut them against Cyrus. Jehovah says, I will be the One preparing your path of conquest. All obstacles will be removed. Doors of brass, barred with iron will not stand in your way. Secret treasures which these kings assume cannot be found will be given to you to the end that you may know that I am God and that it is I, the God of Israel, who called you by your name many years before you were born. I have called you primarily for the sake of My servant, Israel, My chosen people. I have prophesied your name long before your birth, even though you do not acknowledge

Me as the Only God. There is no other god. I, Jehovah, am sovereign in the affairs of all men. It is I, Jehovah, who will empower you in your conquests Cyrus, although you do not acknowledge Me. I will do this so that the whole world will have opportunity to know there is no god besides Me. I am Jehovah, and there is no other god. I create both light and darkness; I send both blessing and woe; I, Jehovah, am the creator of everything. I, Jehovah, have created all of heaven and earth and I will command it and use all My creation to bring about the blessings of salvation and righteousness which I have promised to Israel, My chosen.

### COMMENTS

v. 1-4 ANOINTED: The word translated *anointed* is the Hebrew word *meshikho* a form of the word *messiah*. It is astounding to learn that Jehovah has "anointed" a pagan emperor to become a "messiah" for His people. Yet, the Lord has used many "servants" from among the heathen (see Daniel 7 & 8, Jer. 27:1-11) to fulfill His redemptive plan. It is apparent that Cyrus, in his deliverance of Israel, served as a type of the Messiah-Servant to come, Jesus Christ (see special study on Types in this volume). Cyrus was not born for more than a hundred years after this prophecy. Cyrus was born in a little province in north-western Elam and just south of Media. He came to power in about 559 B.C. He was actually Cyrus II, a descendant of Achaemenes (700-675 B.C.). Cyrus' own cylinder indicates he was thoroughly imbued with the idea that he was *the* man of destiny: (the opening lines are quoted here)

"Through all the lands he (Marduk) searched, he saw him (Cyrus), and he sought the righteous prince, after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. Cyrus, king of Anshan, he called by name; to sovereignty over the whole world he appointed him."

The rule of Cyrus meant for all the conquered world a renewed

and continuous political prosperity and a religious liberty unknown in the annals of other rulers. He was the protector and the bounteous promoter of the welfare of his subjects. Their deities and their methods of worship were graciously restored, and dignified by elevating them to their former positions. The peoples, also, who had been forcibly deported from their native lands, were restored by the king's decrees. This generous policy, in contrast with that of preceding rulers, gave Cyrus great influence and power over his subjects. Part of his popularity may have been due to the fact that he was an Aryan (Caucasian), with newer and freer ideas than those of Semitic potentates.

There is an interesting statement in Josephus to the effect that Cyrus read Isaiah's prophecy and was influenced by it to free the Jews (*Antiq.* XI.1.2.). It is not impossible! Cyrus was a man interested in the religion, culture, and history of all his subjects. In his proclamation (Ezra 1:1f; II Chron. 36:22f) Cyrus attributes his actions to a knowledge of what Jehovah "commanded" him to do. There were, as we have mentioned, other reasons for Cyrus' actions; (1) it was national policy to "restore peoples to their own dwelling places." (2) Palestine had been from time immemorial a buffer state between southwestern Asia and Egypt. To occupy and hold the strong fortress of Jerusalem was the first step toward the conquest of the rival power. If Cyrus could secure that advantage by aiding the Jews to rebuild and hold it, he would be setting up one battlement in the face of Egypt's army. For one of his next strokes, after Babylon, would be at the rival imperial power on the Nile. For more on Cyrus and the Medo-Persian Empire see *Daniel*, by Butler, College Press, pages 223-233 and 296-298.

There are three distinct reasons God uses Cyrus and speaks so intimately to him nearly 200 years before his birth:

- (a) Cyrus is to know that the God of Israel is the only God there is, (v. 3).
- (b) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah for the sake of Israel, (v. 4).
- (c) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah in order that all men may know Jehovah is the only God there is, (v. 6).

It is apparent that Cyrus was never converted to monotheism or the worship of Jehovah as the only God, for in many of his proclamations, he acknowledges Marduk as god. Whatever Cyrus accomplished, it was because Jehovah, sovereign Lord of all creation, permitted him to do it. Not only did Jehovah permit it, He assisted Cyrus in its accomplishment (cf. Jer. 27:1-11).

v. 5-8 **ALMIGHTY:** This is one of the great passages of the Bible teaching that God is immanent in His creation. God has not created the universe and wound it like a clock, only to go off somewhere and let it run itself. He is personally and directly involved in its day-by-day operation.

- a. In Christ, all things consist, or hold together, Col. 1:17
- b. He upholds all things by the word of His power, Heb. 1:3
- c. He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, Mt. 5:45
- d. He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, Acts 14:17
- e. His wrath is revealed from heaven, Rom. 1:18-32, "in the things that have been made."
- f. In everything God works for good with those who love him, Rom. 8:28-29
- g. All that happens in history and nature is under the sovereign Throne of God and the Lamb (cf. Rev. 4-9).

If there is one thing made abundantly clear from the prophets (and confirmed by the New Testament) it is that God is sovereign of both weal and woe. Is God in the whirlwind? Yes! (Nahum 1:3; Zech. 9:14). Is God in the earthquake? Yes! (Isa. 29:6; Acts 16:26; Mt. 24:7; Rev. 6:12; 8:5, etc.). God is in locusts plagues, fires, floods, famines, droughts, plagues. "Does evil befall a city except the Lord hath done it?" (Amos 3:6). When some "good" comes everyone is agreed it is *directly* from the Lord. When some "woe" comes let us be equally assured it is from the Lord. Do tornadoes, earthquakes and famines mean those who are "victimized" are worse sinners than others? No! Jesus cleared that up in Luke 13. Whatever



happens, wherever it happens, it is God's message to a cursed and doomed universe to repent! All who do not repent will likewise perish! What of those who are repenting and yet perish? They "come out of their great tribulation" (Rev. 7:13-17); they are "rested from their labors" (Rev. 14:13); and their works follow after them. They are blessed! There is only one part of God's creation granted the sovereign exercise of free will—man! All the rest of His creation is under His *direct operation*. "Nature" is simply a word used by man to evade this fundamental issue that it is *God* who is Creator and *Sustainer*. But both good and evil, no matter with whom they originate, are never out of God's control. Even Satan's deliberate evil and the freely chosen evil deeds of men are under His control and are being used (and will be ultimately used) to serve His sovereign purposes and redound to His Absolute glory! Both the weal and woe of God is designed to lead man to repentance (cf. Rom. 1:18 with Rom. 2:4); see Isa. 14:24-27; 44:24-28; Jer. 27:1-11; Job 2:1-6; II Cor. 12:1-10; Dan. 2:20-23. Do men still rule by God's sovereign permission? Does God still send famines, earthquakes, fires, floods, whirlwinds, sun and rain, fruit and harvest season? Yes! He is the same God today He was thousands of years ago! Men still choose sin and evil rebellion because God has granted them the freedom to make that choice, and God is in no way to blame for their choice nor is He the author of their evil. But rest assured their evil will in no way triumph over the sovereign will of God. It is His will that their impenitent, unforgiven evil shall be punished forever—and so it will be! Furthermore, their evil in this life is permitted by Him and used as chastening, warning, perfecting, strengthening agents upon all who will put their trust in Him.

Verse eight appears to be Isaiah's own surrender to the expressed sovereignty of God just proclaimed. It is, as it were, a prayer of Isaiah looking forward to the prospective mission of Cyrus and its salvation for the people of God. Isaiah prays that God's whole universe join in with God's program of redemption for Israel and the nations. Let all of God's creation

bring forth and pour down spiritual blessings in heavenly gifts, according to the will and in the power of Jehovah, whose ultimate purpose is a new spiritual creation. Any man who believes and contemplates the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah as expressed by Isaiah here must be led to the same adoring prayer!

### QUIZ

1. Why would God use the term *anointed* to refer to Cyrus?
2. Is it possible that Cyrus might have known about this prophecy?
3. How did Cyrus fulfill this prophecy?
4. To what extent does God exercise control over the universe today?
5. Is God the author of evil?

### b. OBEDIENCE

TEXT: 45:9-13

- 9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?
- 10 Woe unto him that saith unto a father, What begettest thou? or to a woman, with what travailest thou?
- 11 Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.
- 12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens; and all their host have I commanded.
- 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall

let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is God warning not to strive with his Maker?
- b. Why does God challenge, “ask me of the things that are to come”?

### PARAPHRASE

Cursed is the man who contends with Me about what I have just predicted! Men are creatures, not Creators—they are like earthenware pots and have been formed. They are not Formers! Now, shall the clay (man) say to him that fashions it (God), What do you think you are doing—You can’t do that!? For man to tell God He cannot do what He says He will do is as foolish as an unborn son telling his father and mother they cannot bring him forth in birth. This is what Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, Sovereign Creator says: Will you dare to question Me about what I intend to do in the future? Do you presume to tell Me what I can and cannot do with My covenant children? I am the Omnipotent Creator of everything that is! I created the earth and I created man; I created the heavens and all the heavenly beings, and everything that exists is at My command. As I predicted, because of My own righteous purpose, I raise up Cyrus and I will personally make all his ways successful. He will build My city, Jerusalem, and he will free My people from their captivity. He will not do it because he has been paid to do so; he will do it because the Lord Jehovah of hosts has spoken!

## COMMENTS

v. 9-11 **PRESUMPTION:** God knows His former prophecy that Cyrus, a pagan emperor, is to be His anointed servant to deliver God's people, will meet with incredulity. It would not be easy for a Jew to accept the idea that a pagan monarch could be God's "anointed"! That Jehovah, God of Israel, would ever give success to a *goyim* (Gentile) was unacceptable (cf. Hab. 1:12—2:5; Lk. 4:16-30). But the rejection of God's word is moral rebellion and inexcusable. God has demonstrated in the past that He may do anything He wishes to do. He has demonstrated that when He speaks it comes to pass. Those who thus "contend" with Him are like *kheres* (earthenware pots) talking back to their *yatsar* (former) (cf. Isa. 29:16; Jer. 18:1ff; Rom. 9:20; Isa. 10:15). God pronounces *woe* on such presumption. It is insolent disobedience to question God's word as if to say, God, what do you think you are doing by anointing a Gentile—you can't do that! The phrase, "He hath no hands" implies the skeptic is charging God with ineptitude, as if God is going to make a mess of things by anointing Cyrus. Actually, it is the skeptic who is absurd. For a man to advise God is as ridiculous as an unborn child telling its parents they cannot conceive it or bring it to birth. The two verbs *shealvuni* (ask) and *tetsavvuni* (command) are imperatives. This may be translated as either command or question. We have chosen to understand it as a rhetorically satirical question from God to the skeptic. "You dare to question Me about My prophecies? You presume to command Me what to do about My redemptive program for My covenant people?" And all this presumptive meddling in God's pre-announced program is an attempted remonstrance with God about things that have not yet come to pass!

v. 12-13 **PROCLAMATION:** God reiterates His sovereignty. He is omnipotent and omniscient. He is so by right of His Creatorship. He made earth, man, heaven, angels and everything that exists. Everything that exists is at His command—even a Gentile emperor! But more significantly, Israel is His to

command. God's prophecy of deliverance by Cyrus is a command to Israel. Her proper response is obedience—not presumptive skepticism. What God is going to do with Cyrus is on account of God's righteousness—not Cyrus' goodness. The Lord plainly states that Cyrus shall be His servant to rebuild Jerusalem and to free the captive Jews. There were four decrees by Persian rulers authorizing the Jews to return, rebuild and reinstitute their commonwealth (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press, pgs. 347-348). Cyrus made the first decree in 536 B.C. and it is recorded in Ezra 1:2-4. The astounding thing about this statement of Isaiah (v. 13) is that it was made approximately 150 years before the fact! This is proof positive of the supernatural character of the book of Isaiah! It is also of great significance that Isaiah predicts the motivation for Cyrus' freeing of the Jews and his part in rebuilding their nation will not be for "price nor reward." Cyrus will not have to be "paid off," or "bribed." The Jews will not be released for ransom. Zechariah's prophecy reveals that God will keep the world at peace so the Jews may rebuild their temple and their cities—"not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," (cf. Zech. 4:5-14). It is nothing short of amazing that a powerful emperor like Cyrus would free his captives without a struggle and by his own imperial edict. It would be totally unexpected behavior in a world ruler of those days. To allow some 100,000 people, who in 70 years had become an integral part of the economic, political and social system of the empire, to pick up and leave suddenly would cause unimaginable problems. But as uncommon and unimaginable as it may have seemed then, it happened—just as it was predicted. God "stirred up the spirit" of Cyrus and the Jews were returned to Palestine. No great army overpowered Persia; no exchange of money took place; there was not even a "summit meeting" of diplomats working out a release of the captives. Only the amazing power of the fulfillment of the Word of God being demonstrated!

Note the following things about the return from the captivity:

- a. It was begun in 536 B.C., exactly 70 years after the first captivity of Judah in 606 B.C. This exact 70 years was predicted by God's prophets (cf. Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:2)!
- b. It was instituted by Cyrus, emperor of Persia; He was predicted to be the instigator of the return 150 years before he was born, (Isa. 45:1-13)!
- c. The release of the Jews from Persia would in no way profit the emperor Cyrus. There would be no "pay-off." As a matter of fact, Cyrus decreed that people of his realm should contribute to the financial needs of the Jews to help them rebuild their nation (cf. Ezra 1:1-4)!
- d. Not only were the Jews released from captivity, they were charged by the Persian emperor to reinstitute their commonwealth. This meant they were to return to self-governing nationhood (cf. Ezra 7:11-26)!

When Isaiah was making this prophecy of the release of the exiles by the hand of Cyrus, the people of Judah had not yet been taken captive! In fact, their captivity was yet some 50 years away! The point is that Isaiah's people are refusing to believe they are going away into captivity. How much more incredible to believe they will someday be released and returned to their land by an unborn, uncrowned emperor of an unformed empire. One only has to read the book of Jeremiah (esp. Jer. 27-28) to understand the stubborn incredulity of the people of Judah about their subjugation to Babylon. The prediction of the prophets that God's covenant people would be taken into exile was almost totally unacceptable to the populace. The prophets who told God's truth were considered traitors!

Mankind, on the whole, changes little in its attitude toward God's promises that the kingdoms of this world are doomed. Few believed Jesus when He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem—not even the disciples (cf. Mt. 23:37—24:28); not many believed the predictions of John the apostle that Rome would fall (cf. Rev. 6-20; esp. ch. 17-18); and there will continue to be "scoffers, following their own passions and saying,

‘Where is the promise of his coming?’ . . .” (cf. II Pet. 3:1-13). But the word of the Lord is sure! The return of the Jews by Cyrus proves it! Let us heed Isaiah, “Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?” (Isa. 45:11). God will do as He has said, and no one (not even Cyrus) will deter Him! God has spoken! Man’s only intelligent, hopeful response is obedience. Even when God’s declarations are prophetic and, as yet, non-existent man must *believe and act* accordingly!

## QUIZ

1. Why the emphasis on the sovereignty of God’s predictive word here?
2. How are the scoffers characterized in this passage?
3. When did Cyrus let Israel return to its homeland?
4. Why is the return of the Jews so amazing? (name four features).
5. How is God’s prophecy of deliverance by Cyrus a command to the Jews?
6. Is there a lesson to be learned today from this prediction of the return?

## c. ORDER

TEXT: 45:14-19

- 14 Thus saith Jehovah, The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall go after thee; in chains they shall come over; and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.
- 15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel,

the Saviour.

- 16 They shall be put to shame, yea, confounded, all of them; they shall go into confusion together that are makers of idols.
- 17 But Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end.
- 18 For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else.
- 19 I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I, Jehovah, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

### QUERIES

- a. How would the wealth of the Egyptians come to the Jews?
- b. Why say God "hides" himself?
- c. What is the point of reminding of Jehovah's creative power?

### PARAPHRASE

As a result of what I am going to do with Cyrus, says the Lord, Israel will eventually inherit the wealth of those who once opposed her, like Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sabeans. That wealth will be the best of mankind putting itself in willing servitude to follow the leadership of Israel. Men from all over the world will bow down and confess that the True God is in this new Israel, beseeching her, Let us join you for we believe there is no God except your God. Of a truth, O God of Israel, you are a Saviour who works mysteriously and incomprehensibly to the finite mind of man. At that time, the great contrast between the futility of worshipping idols and the complete and



eternal salvation Jehovah gives will be made manifest. The idol worshippers will be shown to be confused and the worshippers of Jehovah will never be confused. This is what Jehovah, the One who does everything for a purpose, says. Jehovah is the God of Order and Design. Everything He does has as its goal the exaltation of His name and the salvation of man—even the captivity and return of His children. He is Creator, and there is no other! He is Sovereign, and there is no other! All of this concerning His sovereignty and His purposefulness He has made known by revelation. He has even revealed His intention to redeem mankind. He has not, like the false gods, made Himself inaccessible or unknowable. I have never said to Israel, You may look for Me but I will not let you find Me. I am Jehovah, and I speak the truth openly; whatever I say is right, and it will come to pass!

### COMMENTS

v. 14 CONVERSION: What is predicted in this verse will come as a consequence of what has been said about believing and obeying the promise of deliverance from the captivity through Cryus. God is going to form a *new* Israel by the process of judgment (captivity) and redemption (return). He is going to prepare a remnant of faithful believers through which He may bring the Messiah and redeem the whole world. This messianic advent is not going to occur immediately after the return from captivity. There is no necessity to force the passage to say that. But the release of the captives and the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth will be the beginning of that total process which culminates in the first coming of Christ (cf. our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, 9:24-27, pgs. 343-356). The figurative picture of many nations coming to Israel with their treasures is a favorite expression of Isaiah to predict the messianic age (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 18:7; 19:16-25; 23:18; 60:5-22; 61:5-11, etc.). It would demand too much to force this passage to a literal meaning. We have here a prediction that the

inveterate enemies of Israel will, as a result of Israel's return to her homeland, *willingly* turn over to Israel their wealth, *willingly* surrender to Israel "in chains," and *willingly* beseech Israel to be allowed to join in the worship of Israel's God. Such action has certainly never occurred by political or military persuasion. It could only be the result of conversion. Isaiah is predicting that the "new" Israel, resulting from the restored and repenting messianic remnant, will one day see the "wealth" of its enemies willingly surrendered to it. This "new" Israel will also see men of all nations, Gentiles, becoming bond-servants to Jehovah and His kingdom. Gentiles will one day recognize that there is only One true God, and He is Jehovah, and they will beg to be joined to His people. Cyrus' release of the exiles will serve this purpose. Isaiah does not tell us all the events of history that will transpire between Cyrus and the conversion of the Gentiles to the "new" Israel. That is not relevant here. The point of Isaiah's message here is that Jehovah is sovereign—He is supreme. Jehovah is a God of purpose and order, the prophet affirms and Jehovah's ultimate purpose is the redemption, not just of a 100,000 exiles from Mesopotamia, but of the whole world.

v. 15-17 CERTITUDE: Isaiah now moves to an expression of awe and praise for the unsearchableness of God's ways. The Hebrew word *misettatter* is translated "hidest thyself," and is similar to the Greek word *musterion* ("mystery") which means simply, *unknown*, or *unrevealed*. God is knowable when He reveals Himself. But there are depths to the character and mind of God that finite man could never know even if they were revealed to him. Man, living in a physical, time-space, temporal capsule is incapable of comprehending a non-physical, non-time-space, non-temporary existence. God reveals as much of Himself as man needs and is able to assimilate for the purpose of redemption and salvation and sanctification. Beyond that man is at a loss to know, not because God is unwilling, but because man is incapable (cf. Isa. 55:6-11; John 16:12; Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 2:6-13). God's predictions that He will work through a pagan ruler (Cyrus) to

return the exiles and that from this will come a "new" Israel which will incorporate "slaves" who have willingly surrendered from Egypt, Ethiopia, etc., is "unsearchable" and "inscrutable." God works in His plan of redemption according to His sovereign will (this is the message of Romans 9-11). Man may understand enough of God's nature to know He is sovereign. But what man needs more than understanding is belief and obedience.

Incomprehensible as it may seem, the work of God through the *new* Israel, begun with the return of the exiles by Cyrus, will result in a great demonstration of the futility of idolatry. It seems altogether incongruous that a great pagan emperor who worships idols would begin a work that would ultimately expose the shamefulness of idolatry, but that is the meaning of verse 16. In contrast with the chaos and hopelessness of idolatry, the *new* Israel will know the orderliness and salvation of the One True God. The Israel of God will *never* know shame or confusion—her salvation and hope will outlast time. The Israel of Isaiah's day was to put its hope in this as a certitude because Jehovah is the God of order and purpose. His ways are not reducible to human reasoning or human experience, but He has revealed His nature sufficiently that human beings may trust Him completely to have their redemption and glorification as His purpose in everything He does and says. Faith in the certitude of God's purpose would be the only thing that would sustain Isaiah's people through Babylonian captivity and the long centuries of "indignation" until the coming of the Messiah.

v. 18-19 COHERENCE: Isaiah continues the theme of purposefulness. God made the world for order and purpose. He did not intend it to be perverted and turned into chaos by rebellion and sin. But man made "waste" of God's creation when he believed Satan and disobeyed God. This is Isaiah's message in verse 18. The implication is that God will, through the work begun by Cyrus and the returned exiles, proceed to restore order and purpose to His creation. Restoration of *order* is the message of Romans 1-8; it is the message of Hebrews 2:5-18.

Man once had dominion over an ordered, purposeful, paradise; he forfeited it by sin and his paradise became a "futility" (cf. Rom. 8:20); Christ's meritorious work paid the redemptive price for man and his planet and one day this redemption will be consummated (Heb. 2:5-18), and man redeemed by covenant relationship to his Maker will once again have dominion over Paradise. This is the ultimate purpose of Jehovah and the goal of the work of Cyrus and the returned exiles! The coherent reunion of man with his Maker and man with his surroundings is the goal of God. Man in oneness with his God and with his fellow man is what Jesus fervently prayed for and died for (cf. Jn. 17:1ff). Only God could accomplish that. And He would accomplish it through things unsearchable and inscrutable to the wisdom of men—the gospel of the cross (cf. I Cor. 1:10-31). All the philosophies and political schemes of men put together will never accomplish what God can do through the "foolishness" of the message of the cross of Christ—that is, reunite man in a divine coherence with his Maker!

Although the ways and means by which God does this may not be fully understood, the fact that He is going to do it is no secret! This is what the prophet says in verse 19. Jehovah makes every possible effort to reveal Himself. He wants men to trust Him and love Him and obey Him. He is not like the pagan gods and their devotees whose one aim seems to be to conceal. Those who worshiped idols and practiced sorcery found themselves being told their gods could only be discovered by secret rituals and then only a select few could know the rituals. Most Gentiles understood clearly that their gods were simply creatures of mythology and fantasy. Most were skeptical of any reality connected with religion. Jehovah is not like that! When He speaks He speaks truth. When He acts, what He does is right and real. He spoke in revelation to man. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets . . ." (Heb. 1:1). There was no dearth of communication from Jehovah, both in word and deed, even to the day of Isaiah. He declared His purposefulness and faithfulness over and over. Now, Isaiah is calling upon his contemporaries