

exhort one another (from the written word) lest their hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin . . .

D. Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14); quote scripture (Matt. 4:5-6); perform lying wonders (Rev. 13:11-18); and he is able to enter the mind of man by the power of thought . . . he is a spirit of disobedience, etc.

E. Some examples of people who thought they were doing God's service when following the subjective feelings of their hearts:

1. The disciples, led by Judas, thought that Mary "wasted" the ointment by pouring it upon Jesus and it could have been sold and given to the poor (Mt. 26:9; Mk. 14:5; Jn. 12:5) . . . THEY HAD TO HAVE AN OBJECTIVE REVEALED TO THEM IN THE WORDS OF JESUS TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THEIR CROOKED SUBJECTIVE THINKING.
2. Peter thought that defending the life of Jesus against His enemies was the proper thing to do, but it was Satan whispering to Peter (Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:32-33).
3. Paul said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth . . ." even to the persecution and killing of Christians (Acts 22:4; 26:9-11; I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6; I Tim. 1:13) . . . he lived in all good conscience in so doing . . . IT TOOK AN OBJECTIVE REVELATION TO PAUL TO STRAIGHTEN OUT HIS THINKING.

## 5. ATONE, CHAPTER 53

### a. SHUNNED

TEXT: 53:1-3

1 Who had believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and

when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.  
 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

### QUERIES

- a. What message was not believed?
- b. What is the "dry ground" from which He grew?
- c. Why was the Servant a "man of sorrows"?

### PARAPHRASE

But when the Suffering Servant comes, who will have believed this message of the exaltation of the Servant from such a state of deep degradation? who will have recognized in this the victorious, powerful "arm" of Jehovah? It was the plan of God that His Servant take the form of man and grow up like a fragile, green plant sprouting from dry and sterile ground. In our eyes there was nothing in Him to make Him attractive as king or Messiah. We saw nothing in Him that made us want Him or want to follow Him as our leader. In fact, we despised Him and rejected Him; He suffered the sorrow of rejection and grief of our unbelief as well as our physical persecutions. We went out of our way to shun Him and ignore Him.

### COMMENTS

v. 1 UNBELIEVING: Chapter 53 is still in the *predictive present tense*. It is as if the Servant has come, been rejected, slaughtered and the people of Israel are looking at it all in retrospect! The overall reaction of the nation to Jesus' claims to be the Messiah was scoffing, mockery, rejection and persecution. He gained a few disciples, but at the arrest in Gethsemane, they all forsook Him and fled (Mk. 14:50). The nation, as a whole, could not believe that Jehovah was at work revealing His "Arm" in the itinerant Galilean carpenter's son. It was especially difficult for any who had been attracted to Him during His life to believe that He was God's Servant when they

gathered at Golgotha and saw His humiliating death, (cf. Lk. 24:13-27). The believing, penitent Jews after their baptism (Acts 2:37, etc.) still marvelled that they could have been so unbelieving. They are represented here by the prophet as continually marvelling as they reflect on their blindness. Twice in the N.T. this very verse of Isaiah's prophecy is quoted as Jesus (Jn. 12:38) and Paul (Rom. 10:16) express shock that the Jews did not believe when Jehovah's Servant came to them.

Is there any question as to the identity of this Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53? Servant of Jehovah, *'ebed Yahweh* in Hebrew is prophesied at least 20 times in Isaiah chapters 40-53. Sometimes it refers to Cyrus, king of Persia; sometimes it refers to the nation of Israel (41:8; 42:19); but most often it refers to the Messiah (42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13—53:12; 61:1-3). The Servant is the same *person* (not nation) previously described in 7:14; 9:6ff; 11:1-5. He is also the "Branch" of 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5ff; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12ff. The inspired authors of the New Testament specifically confirm the following prophecies of the Servant are fulfilled in Jesus Christ; Isa. 42:1-4 fulfilled in Mt. 12:18-21; Isa. 52:13—53:12 fulfilled (or quoted) in Mt. 8:17; Lk. 22:37; Jn. 12:38; Acts 8:32ff; Rom. 10:16. The Servant's *mission* can only be fulfilled by Christ:

1. Birth (Isa. 49:1; 53:2; Lk. 1:31-35)
2. Anointing (Isa. 42:1; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1; Mt. 3:16; Lk. 4:18ff)
3. Ministry (Isa. 49:8-13; Acts 10:36-43)
4. Rejection (Isa. 49:4-7; 53:1-3; Acts 3:13-18)
5. Obedience (Isa. 40:4-7; Phil. 2:5-11)
6. New Covenant (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; Mt. 26:26-29)
7. Vicarious death (Isa. 53:4-12; I Pet. 2:22-25)
8. Resurrection (Isa. 53:10-12; Acts 2:24-36)
9. Salvation Offered (Isa. 49:8; 61:2; Lk. 24:46-49)
10. Mission to Gentiles (Isa. 42:1, 6ff; 49:6, 12; 60:3, 9; Mt. 28:18-20)
11. Glorification and Intercession 49:3; 53:12; Acts 2:33-36; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 7:24ff)
12. Jesus came to *serve*. (Mt. 20:28; Jn. 12:13-20, etc.)

v. 2-3 UNCIVIL: What Jew in his right mind would ever have dreamed or imagined rejecting his Messiah or Jehovah's Servant in such an odious way as Isaiah predicts? Only the most shameful incivility prompts men to deliberately "hide" from another human being. Yet these verses vividly portray the scandalous hatred the Jews will manifest toward the Incarnate Servant. It is the life-story of the Servant from the cradle to the grave. The Servant's entry into this world was so inglorious; born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), of poor parentage, in a stable. When He grew up as a lad in Nazareth He was just like any other lad according to all outward appearances (Lk. 2:51-52) (with the one exception of confounding the scholars at Jerusalem, Lk. 2:41-50).

"He grew up before him . . ." means the Servant grew up in the eyes of Jehovah, or, by the foreordained plan of God, "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." Jehovah sent His Servant to the world through the Jews, despised and harassed people by the Roman world of Christ's day. He grew up in Nazareth which was in Galilee (which means, "circuit of the Gentiles"). "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 1:46) was the attitude toward that infamous village. That the Servant of Jehovah, the Messiah, should come from a carpenter's family would be unthinkable to Jewish theology. A tender, green plant in dry parched ground is regarded with skepticism as to its origin and its survival. So Christ was looked upon.

Among all ancient peoples (even as among some modern advertisers) ideal physique, refined facial features, etc., were considered necessary prerequisites of future greatness, along with "right" parents, "right" birthplace, "right" schools, etc. These verses are not intended to describe Christ's facial features or His physique. They are simply predicting that men would judge Him by that inauspicious human appearance and completely reject Him because of their presuppositions. When Jesus was only a baby, Simeon the aged prophet took Him in his arms and predicted He was the "consolation of Israel and a light unto the Gentiles" but that He would become

a "sign that is spoken against," (cf. Lk. 2:22-35). When He was arrested and mocked and tortured by the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, there was no "form or comeliness" in Him that any of the nation desired Him to be king. Why would God plan it that His Servant come into the world in such untoward surroundings? In order to put men into the "refiner's fire." All who beheld His glory through eyes of faith and saw beyond the humiliation of the incarnation that He was the Son of God became sons of God. All who were blinded by their own carnal standards of "comeliness" and judged Jesus by them became "sons of disobedience." God wanted to get at the heart of man, for that is what He judges, not outward appearances.

Jesus was seldom treated with indifference. When He spoke or acted, people either clamored after Him or plotted against Him. But even most of the clamoring of the multitudes was only superficial. It was motivated by fleshly hunger for more "bread and fish" or for instantaneous healing of sicknesses. The Sadducees and Pharisees hated the Servant and plotted His death because He stripped away their facade of orthodoxy and exposed their immoral and rebellious hearts. And, in the end, these pretentious theologians and greedy legalists seduced the carnal-minded multitudes to clamor for His crucifixion! He was despised and rejected of men; forsaken and shunned. The two Hebrew words *makeoyoth* and *kholiy* are literally, "pain" and "sickness," but are translated, "sorrows" and "grief." When people saw that His earthly life was characterized by trouble, pain, rejection, sorrow, poverty, humiliation, absolute honesty and purity, few wanted to have anything to do with Him. Misunderstood by all—even His select disciples and His own human family—He was a "man of sorrows" (see comments on 49:4). How could Jesus have been a "man of sorrows" and yet speak so much of his "joy"? Because the *object* of His joy was beyond this world! (Heb. 12:1ff). All men who live godly in this world will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12; Jn. 15:18ff; 16:33), but they may also have joy if the *object* of their joy is beyond this world (Jn. 4:34; 15:11; 17:13, etc.).

What people turned away from the Servant of the Lord for when He was in human form on the earth they still turn away from Him for today—His substitutionary atonement. Some are superficially in agreement with what they think is His pacifistic humanitarianism or His socialistic human-rights stance, but they absolutely will not surrender to the truth that Jesus had to die for their sin. This is what was so unacceptable to the self-righteous Pharisees of Jesus' day. It remains a threat to the self-righteousness of men today!

### QUIZ

1. How extensive was the unbelief predicted by Isaiah?
2. Who, alone, could fulfill the predictions of the Suffering Servant?
3. Would it have been a normal thing for the Jews to reject their Messiah?
4. Why did they reject the Servant-Messiah when He came?
5. Why did God foreordain such an inauspicious incarnation for His Servant?
6. What was the fundamental issue over which people turned away from Jesus?

### b. SUFFERS

TEXT: 53:4-9

- 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- 7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?
- 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

### QUERIES

- a. How did He bear our "griefs and sorrows"?
- b. How did Jehovah lay on Him the iniquity of us all?
- c. Did any of His generation consider that he was cut off . . . for the stroke that was due them?

### PARAPHRASE

And yet, it was the suffering that should have been ours He suffered; it was our pain He bore. All the time we were thinking that His suffering and humiliation was a sign that He was a blasphemer and God was punishing Him! But He was not a sinner—we were, and it was because of our sins He was wounded and because of our evil that He was willing to be scourged and crucified. Because of His substitutionary punishment for our sins we are vicariously justified and cleansed of iniquity and declared at peace with God. We are the ones who strayed away from The Shepherd. We are the ones who acted like dumb sheep wandering into unsafe and self-destructive pathways. We are the guilty ones, but God laid on Him the guilt of everyone of us. He was treated unjustly and cruelly, but he endured it willingly and without retaliation; He was

innocent, and like an innocent lamb that is sacrificially slaughtered, He surrendered to death for us. Like a sheep that submits to being sheared without fighting back, so He did not resist His persecutors. He was tried, sentenced and led away to be crucified when He was completely innocent, and no one cared or understood that He was suffering the penalty that should have been every man's. Paradoxically, He was buried like a criminal but in a rich man's grave. He had done no wrong and had never spoken falsehood.

### COMMENTS

v. 4-6 ATONING GRACE: Unusual pain, sorrow and grief was equated with unusual guilt in the ancient world. Job's three friends told Job his calamities were punishment from God for his sinfulness. The man born blind was stigmatized as a sinner both by the disciples of Jesus and the Pharisees (cf. John 9:1ff). Jesus *corrected* this concept in Luke 13 by saying that those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were *not* worse sinners than others but that all calamities were warnings to the world to repent. And the Jews rationalized their prejudice against Jesus by mocking Him as a criminal at His crucifixion. Rather than admit their own ideas about God's Messiah were contrary to the Old Testament, they accused Jesus of blasphemy and pointed to His violation of their traditions and His humble life-style as proof that God was punishing Him for being such a sinner.

But there was nothing wrong with Him. We (all mankind) were the guilty ones. The rejection, misunderstanding, poverty, humiliation, slander He endured should have been ours. He was finally forsaken by God, suffered the second death (Mt. 27:46) and was *made to be sin* on our behalf (II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). He bore our sins on the tree (II Pet. 2:22-25). The Righteous died for the unrighteous (II Pet. 3:18). Christ did not deserve any of what He suffered. He was hated without cause (Jn. 15:24-25). The great capsulation of the atonement



is Romans 3:21-26. The real suffering of the Servant was spiritual, not physical. Many men have suffered physically (perhaps even more torture than crucifixion), but He was innocent, without sin, and actually became sin and suffered spiritual separation (death) from the Father for those who actually deserved it. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb *meholal* translated "wounded" means literally *pierced, perforated*, a precise prophecy of the piercing of Christ's body by the Roman soldier (John 19:34-37).

Do verses four and five indicate that the atonement of Christ also provided miraculous healing of physical sicknesses for all mankind? Some modern faith-healers contend that all men who believe in the atonement of Christ may expect God to heal their bodies. T. J. McCrossan in his *Bodily Healing and the Atonement*, pg. 16, says, "Again all Christians should expect God to heal their bodies today, because Christ died to atone for our sickness as well as for our sins." Warren C. Roark, compiler of *Divine Healing*, pub. The Warner Press, Anderson, Ind., 1945, records a statement by a modern advocate of this view, E. E. Byers, pg. 58, "God . . . in the atonement . . . made provision for the healing of man's mortal body so long as he lived in this world." Although honest exegesis must admit that the Hebrew words *makeoyoth* and *kholiy* may literally mean "pain" and "sickness," one must understand they may also be figuratively translated "griefs" and "sorrows." The following considerations make it clear that Isaiah's prophecy of the atonement by the Suffering Servant did *not* mean to include physical healing for *all* believers:

1. The *context* (all important in proper exegesis) indicates the subject is sin, spiritual sickness, not physical sickness. If the atonement made provision for the healing of man's mortal body so long as he lived . . . he would live forever in this world! Death is the cumulative effect of one physical malady or another.
2. In Matthew 8:16-17 a *portion* of Isaiah's prophecy is quoted in connection with Christ's healing of some physical

sicknesses. However, it is highly significant that verse five was *not* quoted by Matthew ("with his stripes we are healed"). Furthermore, Jesus was fulfilling verse four three years before the atonement was made. Verse four was fulfilled in His divine ministry of healing, and not when He hung on the cross. Matthew was simply claiming, therefore, that Christ in performing miracles of healing, was fulfilling what Isaiah prophesied of His healing ministry and not His atonement.

3. There is no statement in the whole Bible suggesting that Christ "bore our sicknesses in his own body on the tree," or that he was made to be "sick, diseased, or possessed with infirmity" for us.
4. The New Testament plainly shows that not all of the healings of Jesus demanded faith in Him. Thus, the efficacy of His atonement could not apply to the healing.
5. The New Testament plainly shows that many people with faith in the atonement of Christ were *not* healed of their sicknesses, including the great apostle Paul!

*Some questions on healing in the atonement:*

- a. If the atonement provides for physical healing, why does not one receive healing at conversion—the place where the efficacy of the atonement is applied?
- b. If the atonement provides for physical healing, why do not all believers receive healing? (cf. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" II Cor. 12:7-10).
- c. Why is there as large a *percentage* of sickness among believers as there is among unbelievers?
- d. Why did Paul prescribe a medical treatment to Timothy for his "oft infirmities"? (I Tim. 5:23)
- e. Why are there so many failures among faithful, honest, believing people who so earnestly and diligently seek healing?

## THE HEALING MIRACLES OF CHRIST

Case	References	Nature of Malady	Nature of Cure	Comment
Nobleman's son	John 4:46, 54	Sick at the point of death	Healed the same hour	Father believed, but not the son
Impotent man	John 5:1-47	Infirm 30 years; couldn't walk	Made whole at once	No faith, except to walk
Demoniac in the Capernaum Synagogue	Mark 1:21-28 Luke 4:33-37	Possessed spirit of unclean demon	Instantly delivered	No faith indicated
Peter's wife's mother	Matt. 8:14-15 Mark 1:29-31 Luke 4:38-39	Possessed of a "great fever"	Fever left her immediately	No faith required
Many in Capernaum	Matt. 8:16-17 Mark 1:32-34 Luke 4:40-41	Demoniacs, sick, diseased	Instantly healed	No faith indicated
Leper	Matt. 8:1-4 Mark 1:40-45 Luke 5:12-16	Full of leprosy	Heal at once	Had faith; not required
Palsied man	Matt. 9:1-8 Mark 2:1-12 Luke 5:17-26	Palsied, could not walk	Instantly healed	Faith of others

Case	References	Nature of Malady	Nature of Cure	Comment
Man with withered hand	Matt. 12:9-14 Mark 3:1-6 Luke 6:6-11	Hand deformed	Instantly healed	No faith required but to extend hand
Many in Galilee	Matt. 4:23-24 Mark 3:7-12 Luke 6:17-19	All manner of sickness	Instantly healed	No faith indicated
Multitudes	Matt. 12:15-21	Not stated	Healed all	No faith
Blind and dumb demoniac	Matt. 12:22-24 Luke 11:14-15	Possessed a devil; blind and dumb	Healed at once	No faith required
Centurion's servant	Matt. 8:5-13 Luke 7:1-10	Palsied, tormented, and nearly dead	Made whole instantly	No faith of servant
Widow's son of Nain	Luke 7:11-17	Dead	Instantly sat up and spoke	No faith possible
Demoniac	Matt. 9:32-34	Dumb and demoniac	Instantly delivered	No faith evident
Two demoniacs at Gadara	Matt. 8:28-34 Mark 5:1-20 Luke 8:26-40	Possessed legion of devils. Fierce, couldn't be bound	Devils instantly cast out	No faith evident

Case	References	Nature of Malady	Nature of Cure	Comment
The daughter of Jairus	Matt. 9:18-25 Mark 5:34-43 Luke 8:43-48	Dead	Made alive at once	No faith possible
Woman with the issue of blood	Matt. 9:20-22 Mark 5:25-34 Luke 8:43-48	Afflicted 12 years Grew worse, suffered much	Made whole at once	Faith present, but not required
Two blind men	Matt. 9:27-31	Blind	Eyes opened immediately	Faith required
Healing of many	Matt. 14:34-36 Mark 6:5-5-56	Diseased	Made perfectly whole	No faith required
Daughter of Syrophonecian woman	Matt. 15:21-28 Mark 7:24-30	Demoniac	Made whole instantly	No faith of daughter, but of mother
Many near Galilee	Matt. 15:29-31	Lame, blind dumb, maimed	Healed at once	No faith indicated
Deaf and dumb man	Mark 7:31-37	Deaf with impediment of speech	Healed at once	No faith indicated
Blind man at Bethsaida	Mark 8:22-26	Blind	Saw at once	No faith indicated

Case	References	Nature of Malady	Nature of Cure	Comment
Demoniac child	Matt. 17:14-21	Lunatic; sore vexed; fell in fire and water	Cured that hour	Faith of the father, but not of child
Blind man	John 9:1-41	Blind from his birth	Saw at once	No faith required but to wash
Woman with infirmity	Luke 13:11-17	Bowed for 18 years	Immediately made straight	No faith required
Man with dropsy	Luke 14:1-6	Dropsy	Healed at once	No faith required
Lazarus	John 11:17-46	Dead	Made alive immediately	No faith possible
Ten lepers	Luke 17:11-19	Leprosy	Healed at once	No faith required
Two blind men	Matt. 20:29-34 Mark 10:46-52 Luke 18:35-43	Blind	Saw immediately	No faith required, but present
Servant of Malchus	Matt. 26:47-56 Mark 14:43-52 Luke 22:47-53 John 18:2-12	Ear severed	Ear replaced immediately	No faith required or indicated

Verse six plainly states the healing we receive from His stripes is the healing from sin. Sin is "going astray" (cf. Rom. 3:10-20). Sin is spiritual, psychological, mental sickness that needs healing. Paul calls sin insanity (I Cor. 15:34). Sin is spiritual disorientation. Man was not spiritually created for sin—it is against his spiritual nature. Spiritually, psychologically, emotionally and mentally man deteriorates when he sins. He begins to die, morally and spiritually when he begins to sin. Sin even causes some physical illnesses. Originally, of course, it caused all human illness and death as a constant reminder to man that he was not made for sin (cf. Rom. 1:27—men receive in their physical and psychological selves the "due penalty" for their sins). Jesus came and died and was raised to make us whole. Upon Him was the chastisement that allowed us to regain our innocence (our healing from sin). He takes the guilt and frees us from the deception of Satan's lies that we may come to our right minds (I Cor. 15:34). We still must suffer physical illnesses and death because of Adam's sin, but no longer do we have to suffer spiritual illness and death! Sin is soul-sickness. It fractures, incapacitates, inebrates and destroys the personhood of man. Forgiveness through Christ's atonement heals and saves us and restores us to the wholeness for which God created us.

v. 7-9 ACQUIESCENT GOODNESS: The Lord's servant was utterly innocent and totally submissive. He said nothing to answer the charges of the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:63); He said nothing to answer the charges of Pilate (Mt. 27:14); He did not answer Herod's questions (Lk. 23:9). Pilate declared Him innocent; the Sanhedrin could bring no true accusation against Him (Jn. 18:19-24). Why did Jesus not argue His case? Would it have persuaded the Jews not to crucify Him even if He had? Jesus' mission as a "lamb" to be slaughtered was unique! He was the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29)! He was the only Person ever with that mission. His death was preordained. He was the Lamb, foreordained from the foundation of the earth to be slain (cf. I Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Acts 2:23). He willingly gave up His life, no one took it from

Him (cf. Jn. 10:17-18; 19:11; Heb. 10:1-10; etc.). We are not obligated to follow His acquiescent surrender to be illegally executed without reasonable defense. We cannot die for the same reason He died! We should never, of course, take the law into our own hands resisting evil. We must, if the occasion arises, suffer unjust trial and death without personally and individually using force to overthrow crooked judges. But that does not mean we cannot use peaceful, rational means to insist that justice be done. The apostle Paul insisted on correcting injustices (cf. Acts 16:35-39; 25:8-12, etc.); he also wrote that Christians should appeal to their civil governments to uphold justice (Rom. 13:1-7).

The Servant was "cut off" from life in this world (cf. our comments on Daniel 9:24-27 where the same phrase "cut off" is used in connection with the atoning death of the Messiah). And although there were a few plain announcements from Christ Himself that He was to die for the "ransom" of man's sins (cf. Jn. 1:29; Mt. 20:28; Mt. 26:26-29; Jn. 14:1-31; 16:10; 17:11), and many Old Testament types and prophecies (Lk. 24:25-49), none of His contemporaries (not even His own disciples) would accept the doctrine that the Messiah was to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sins. The O.T. has at least four plain prophecies that the Messiah will die (Isaiah 53:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 12:10—13:1; Psa. 22:1-31). Still, even those honest, courageous, Jewish fishermen and tax-collectors who confessed that He was the Son of the Living God, refused to accept the predictions of Jesus Himself that He was to die as a ransom (Mt. 16:21-23; 26:30-35; Mk. 8:31-33; 14:26-31; Lk. 9:43-45; 24:13ff; Jn. 12:27-36 [the crowd said, We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever—does not die]; Jn. 8:32-36). Isaiah graphically foretells that the Messiah would be slain as if He were a wicked person—a criminal—and yet, paradoxically, He would be buried in a rich man's grave. History records the exact fulfillment of this! Jesus was sentenced as a blasphemer by the Jews, a seditionist by the Romans and executed on a criminal's cross between two thieves. But He was buried in the rock-hewn tomb of the



rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

It is rather astounding that not one of Jesus' own generation comprehended that He was to die an atoning death. Especially since a few of them confessed that He was who He claimed to be, The Son of the Living God. The prophet, overwhelmed by the importance of the substitutionary atonement involved, falls back once more upon it as the only explanation of an outcome so strange. It was the Messiah's own people who had all the revelations of it in their Law and Prophets, and yet they are the ones who, at first totally rejected it; and ever since only a very small minority of Jews will accept it.

### QUIZ

1. Why did the Jews "esteem" Jesus as "smitten of God"?
2. Why do we say that the real suffering of the Messiah was spiritual?
3. Do verses four-five indicate Jesus' atoning death also provided physical healing to all believers? Why not?
4. How is sin sickness?
5. Are we to follow Christ's example of acquiescing to death if illegally prosecuted and sentenced? Give examples.
6. How plainly does the O.T. and Christ Himself predict His atoning death?

### c. SUCCEEDS

TEXT: 53:10-12

- 10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.
- 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant

justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities.

- 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

### QUERIES

- a. Why did it "please" Jehovah to bruise Christ?
- b. How would the Servant be "satisfied" with His travail?
- c. What "portion" did the Servant receive?

### PARAPHRASE

Although it was God's purpose for the good of man to allow His Servant to be pierced to death and to suffer, when the Servant's death has become expiation for sin, then He will produce a multitude of spiritual descendants. He will then live forever and God's purpose for the good of man will have succeeded because of Him. And when He sees that God's plan has succeeded, He will rejoice with satisfaction. And because He knows and fulfills perfectly Jehovah's plan of salvation, He shall be able to impart righteousness and justification to many people through His atoning sacrifice. On account of His absolute victory over sin and death, He will be rewarded with a glory commensurate with His victory! He will be the greatest among the great. He is the greatest of all because He was servant of all pouring out His life unto death, allowing Himself, though He was sinless, to be made sin for others, putting His sinless innocence down as an offering on behalf of evil and wicked mankind.

## COMMENTS

v. 10 PERPETUITY: The Hebrew word *khaphetz* means, “delighted” or “desired” and indicates that the death of the Messiah involved more than a sterile, unfeeling, deterministic plan of an unfeeling God. It is incomprehensible to the finite mind of sinful man how God could “delight” in the death of His Son, but He did. The Hebrew word translated *bruise* is *heheliy* and means to *make painful*. The Isaiah Scroll from Qumran has the word *vyhlhv* which means *that he might pierce him* (see comments on 53:5).

These verses are some of the strongest of the Old Testament on the resurrection or immortality of the Servant-Messiah. The Servant dies, but He also lives on, succeeds and carries out the work of atonement, redemption, justification, sanctification and intercession that the Father has entrusted to Him, just as it was predicted He would do (Lk. 24:25ff). Other O.T. prophecies of the resurrection of the Messiah:

Psa. 16:1-11 -----Acts 2:25-33

Psa. 110:1-7 -----Acts 2:34-36

Psa. 22:1-31 -----Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34

II Sam. 7:12; Psa. 89:3-4 -----Acts 13:34 (The enduring throne promised to David's Messiah-Son presupposed victory over death.)

Gen. 22 (Abraham and Isaac; Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham, on Mt. Moriah, participated in a dramatic typical event portraying Calvary and the Empty Tomb. Perhaps Jesus was alluding to this when He said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day . . . and was glad.” Jn. 8:56

Psa. 118:22 (The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner).

There is no doubt that Isaiah 53 is Messianic and that it is predicting His atoning death and resurrection. Philip, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, interpreted it thusly, Acts 8:26-40.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a well established fact of history:

*Proof of the Resurrection of Christ:*

1. The historical records, by competent, credible, honest, numerous *eyewitnesses* say the tomb was empty. There is *no* historical testimony or evidence to the contrary. The only explanation is Mt. 28:11-15, soldiers were paid to say His disciples stole the body while the soldiers were asleep. How absurdly incredible!
2. Credible, competent, honest *eyewitnesses* testify they saw Jesus after his death, alive, talking to them, eating fish with them, even saw the nail prints in His hands.
3. The conversion of the enemies of Christianity can only be accounted for by the historical factuality of the resurrection of Christ (Saul of Tarsus; great company of the priests; even some of Caesar's own household).
4. The Catacombs of Rome depict the resurrection of Jesus and testify to the belief in it by first century saints.
5. The existence of the church and its ordinances testifies to the resurrection. The fact of the New Testament itself is inexplicable apart from it.

It is not a question of *could* the resurrection occur or not. It is a question of *did* it occur or not—not a philosophical question, but a historical, scientific question!

Merrill C. Tenney says, "The event is fixed in history, the dynamic is potent for eternity."

Unbelievers say Christ was not raised from the dead—I say prove it! All the reliable evidence we have says He was!

The church began in the city where Jesus' burial was known, among those who could have refuted the testimony of Peter (Acts 2) and proved it false. All they would have to have done was produce the body of Jesus! But 3000 testify that He had arisen and Peter was telling the truth.

*There are Imperatives to the Resurrection.*

1. There is power in it. The power of Christianity is not in the esthetic value of great cathedrals, somber ritual and tradition, nor emotionalism but in the *historical fact* of the

resurrection of Christ.

- a. Gives hope that is living (I Pet. 1:3)
- b. Brings joy unspeakable and full of glory (I Jn. 1:1-4)
- c. Sanctifies and purifies (I Jn. 3:3; Acts 17:32)
- d. Gives power to evangelism (Acts 4:33)
- e. Gives steadfastness (I Cor. 15:58)
2. There is only one alternative to the resurrection. That is a life of eating, drinking, for tomorrow we die (I Cor. 15:12-19 —15:32).
3. But, if Christ is raised from the dead, and we shall be also, then:
  - a. The Bible is God's Word!
  - b. Heaven and Hell are real places!
  - c. Man will live forever, one place or the other!
  - d. A man's sins may really be forgiven!
  - e. The plan of salvation in the N.T. is the only valid one!
  - f. Christ is coming again!
  - g. There is only one church, the universal body of Christ which consists of all who believe in Christ, are repenting of their sins and have been immersed in water in obedience to His command!
  - h. No one will be saved who is not a member of that church!

*The resurrection of Christ makes all the above imperative! There is no middle ground on any of that because His resurrection establishes beyond any question His deity and His authority!*

The Servant shall produce "seed" or descendants. He shall have a family, but it will be a spiritual family (cf. Rom. 9:8; Gal. 3:15-20; 3:23-29). So, it is in being lifted up He will draw men unto Him (cf. Jn. 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32). He shall fall into the ground like a grain of wheat and die, and then bear much fruit (Jn. 12:23-26). And the *khephetz* (delight) of Jehovah shall succeed through His efforts. The delight of Jehovah is, of course, His eternal plan for the redemption of man! What wonder, what unsearchable grace, that Jehovah's delight should be the salvation and regeneration of a planet full of wicked

rebels. But more wonderful, His Son should come to this planet in the form of a man and willingly submit to humiliating death allowing Himself, though absolutely innocent, to become sin on man's behalf!

v. 11 PLEASURE: The Servant will have "travail of . . . soul" (cf. 49:4ff). But He will be "satisfied." For the joyous reward that was set before Him, He could endure the cross (cf. Heb. 12:2). He will look back from His enthronement at the right hand of the Father and see that He has succeeded in accomplishing the once-for-all-time redemption and regeneration of the Father's creation (man and cosmos). As Young points out, the suffix on the Hebrew word *beda'etto* is difficult of interpretation. Is the suffix subjective or objective—that is, is Isaiah speaking of the knowledge that the servant himself possesses or of knowledge of the servant on the part of others? We think the context is emphasizing the successfulness of the Servant Himself and that it is through His own incarnation (human experience) that He performs His work of justification. It was through the experience of obedience as a Son that He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (cf. Heb. 5:7-9; Phil. 2:5-11). The righteous servant (*tzaddiyk 'aveddiy*) will make many righteous (*yatzeddiyk*). He makes it possible for us to become the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21). This was the "grace that was to be ours" which the prophets prophesied (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12). He bore our iniquities and became a "curse for us" (cf. Gal. 3:13).

v. 12 PORTION: On account of the Servant's victory over sin, Satan and death, Jehovah will exalt Him above every other man. The exaltation of the Servant of Jehovah is clearly predicted by the prophet earlier (Isa. 49:7; 52:15). When the Servant made purification for sins, he was enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3-4). When He ascended, He took captivity captive (Eph. 4:8) and dispensed His gifts according to His will and purpose for the ongoing of the kingdom of God here on earth. The Servant whom the Jews crucified, God made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). There is no other name under heaven given among men by

which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). The reason for this exaltation is summarized in the statement, "because he poured out his soul unto death." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

A whole volume could justifiably be written on this chapter alone. Perhaps the most intriguing question about Isaiah 53 is: "If the New Testament is so clear about its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, why do the majority of Jews not see and understand it?" A few references to The Servant of Jehovah in Jewish literature, both ancient and modern, may provide a partial answer to this question:

*Jewish Apocrypha and The Suffering Servant concept:*

The apocalyptic literature of the Jewish apocrypha are such books as I Enoch, The Sibylline Oracles, The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, the Psalms of Solomon, II Esdras, II Baruch and others. They were written in the years 165 B.C.—100 A.D.

In a book entitled, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, by D. S. Russell, pub. Westminster, we learn, "There is no serious evidence of the bringing together of the concepts of the Suffering Servant and the Davidic Messiah before the Christian era." Mr. Russell continues, "The Targum (Jewish Targums are rabbinical interpretations of the O.T.) on Isaiah 53 has often been alluded to, but it cannot be the Suffering Servant Isaiah predicted. The Messiah presented in this Targum is one who will triumph over the heathen and all the enemies of God's people! The suffering he has to endure is minimal and devoid of all vicariousness. In fact, it is hardly suffering at all, for it consists simply in the exposure of himself to those dangers he will have to face in the coming struggle with the heathen before his final victory is assured. There is no mention of an atoning death—no reference to a suffering and dying Messiah.

II Esdras and II Baruch (cir. 90 A.D.) use the word "servant" to describe the Messiah from the seed of David. However, there is no suggestion of a suffering Messiah, or an atoning

death. He is not killed by enemies or disease—he simply ceases to exist. The reference to his death is with the same casualness as any human death. He establishes his kingdom, dies, and presumably will rise with other humans at the general resurrection of the people of God.”

*Modern Jews:*

1. A Jewish woman doctor, recounting her conversion to Christ in a book called *Pursued*:

While recuperating from illness she began reading a Bible. She read Isaiah 53. She was forced to acknowledge it must be talking about the Messiah. But then she said she refused to accept the consequences of that passage for her Messiah. Suddenly she realized that she was reading from the KJV, “A Protestant Bible! Of course, it was slanted to sound that way. I went to sleep that night, confident I had caught the gentiles at a not-too-clever trick.”

But then she read it in a Jewish Bible and it was basically the same message!

2. “Chapters 52-53 (of Isaiah) and other chapters contain the prophecies concerning the ‘suffering servant’ which the Christian church later interpreted as referring to Jesus, but which, *in Jewish tradition, refer to the people of Israel*,” pg. 151 from, *The International Jewish Encyclopedia*, by Rabbi ben Isaacson and Deborah Wigoder, compiled and produced in Israel for Prentice-Hall.
3. *History of the Jew*, by Heindrich Graetz, pub. The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1893, in chapter entitled “Messianic Expectations and Origins of Christianity,” indicates the idea of a *suffering* Messiah was completely foreign to Jewish thinking.

*It is not difficult now to understand the “rebuke” Peter had for Jesus (Mt. 16:22) when Jesus predicted His death!*



#### 4. *Non-Messianic Interpretations:*

- a. Most prevalent among Jewish writers is that Isaiah 53 means *the nation of Israel*. Some say *empirical* Israel; some say *ideal* Israel; some say the *pious remnant* of the true Israel.
  - b. Isaiah 53 means the *prophetical order*—i.e. the collective body of the prophets . . . as the sacrificial victim taking upon itself the sins of the people.
  - c. Isaiah 53 means *an individual* (Hezekiah, Isaiah, Josiah, but most frequently, Jeremiah), but a *human* individual. Some said, an *unknown* sufferer (sounds like the apostles first answer to Jesus at Cesarea Philippi, Mt. 16).
5. Aaron Kligerman, in his book, *Old Testament Messianic Prophecy*, pub. Zondervan, paperback, thinks there were some Jewish interpretations which believed the Suffering Servant was to be the Messiah. He refers to *Yalkut* and *Rambam* which are Talmudic and Midrashic literature of the days of Maimonides (cir. 1135-1204 A.D.). These are so obscure, however, they are not worth considering as having direct reference to the Messiah as an individual. They could be understood in any of the categories listed above. Furthermore, they are of such late date they are probably concessions to Christian interpretations of Isaiah 53.

Jews are not alone in disavowing the biblical doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, former head of the World Council of Churches says in his book, *A Testament of the Faith*, pg. 144, Boston, 1958;

“We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all the sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicted upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone.”

It is not trite to repeat that Philip, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, applied Isaiah 53 to the atoning death and justifying resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to see how one may claim to be a disciple of Jesus and contradict this doctrine!

## QUIZ

1. How do these verses teach the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
2. Is the resurrection of Christ historically valid?
3. What "knowledge" of Himself was involved in the Servant's justifying work?
4. Why do you think the Jews will not accept Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53?

## EXAMINATION

### CHAPTERS FORTY-NINE THROUGH FIFTY-THREE

## DEFINITION

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

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Israel</i>          | 7. <i>cup</i> of staggering    |
| 2. <i>acceptable</i> time | 8. <i>sprinkle</i> man nations |
| 3. <i>Sinim</i>           | 9. <i>griefs</i> and sorrows   |
| 4. <i>graven</i> on palms | 10. <i>wounded</i>             |
| 5. face like <i>flint</i> | 11. <i>pleased</i> , pleasure  |
| 6. <i>monster</i>         | 12. <i>bruised</i>             |

## MEMORIZATION

Surely he hath \_\_\_\_\_ our griefs, and carried our \_\_\_\_\_;  
yet we did esteem him \_\_\_\_\_, smitten of God, an \_\_\_\_\_.

But he was \_\_\_\_\_ for our transgressions, he was \_\_\_\_\_ for our iniquities; the chastisement of our \_\_\_\_\_ was upon him; and with his stripes we are \_\_\_\_\_. All we like sheep have gone \_\_\_\_\_; we have turned every one to his own \_\_\_\_\_; and Jehovah hath laid on him the \_\_\_\_\_ of us all. (53:4-6)

### EXPLANATION

1. Explain the prediction that the Messiah would experience frustration.
2. Explain how the Messiah was to *become* a covenant.
3. Explain why the Servant (Messiah) was to be "as one who was taught."
4. Explain how O.T. people could have God's law *on their heart*.
5. Explain how the cup of staggering was taken out of Jerusalem's hand.
6. Explain how Christ bore our griefs and sorrows in His death.
7. Explain why Isaiah 53 does not teach divine healing for today.
8. Explain why the Messiah would be satisfied with the travail of His soul.
9. Explain why the majority of the Jews did not accept Jesus as the Servant.

### 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. Is there an application for overcoming frustration in our own human experience from the Messiah's overcoming?
2. How may we apply the proofs we have that God bared His holy arm in Jesus Christ?

## I S A I A H

3. Does the humiliating entrance and exit of the Messiah in history apply to modern man's relation to God?
4. Does the personal refusal of Christ to defend Himself at His illegal trial and death mean Christians must never defend themselves? Why?
5. How can modern men accept and apply the death of a Jewish man (Jesus) nearly 2000 years ago for the atonement of their personal sins?
6. Are there any definitive manifestations of God's *love* in this section that may contradict the allegation that the God of the O.T. is *only* a God of wrath?
7. Are there any teachings in this section which may be applied to the idea that there is salvation for the world *only* in Jesus Christ?

### SPECIAL STUDY

#### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AS MANIFESTED BY THE PROPHETS

by John Buttermann

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. God is Righteous in Judging His People

1. God is the judge over all the earth
  - a. From the beginning in the Hebrew community the judges were acting on behalf of God (Deut. 1:17)
  - b. It was unthinkable that he would act unfairly (Gen. 18:25)
2. God is the fountain of justice
  - a. Everything he does may be relied upon as just (Deut. 32:4; Zeph. 3:5)
  - b. God's equity as judge will be seen most clearly "in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5)

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AS MANIFESTED BY THE PROPHETS

- c. Man's righteousness is defined in terms of God's judgment
- 3. God is impartial in his dealings
  - a. The prophet Amos called for a similar righteousness in men (Amos 5:15, 24)
  - b. Inflicting retribution is an element of the righteousness of God (Isaiah 61:2)
  - c. If in a world of unrighteousness, righteousness is to be established, God himself must become the indicator and protector of the oppressed
  - d. God's righteousness is manifested in his defense of those who have no helper (Psalms 10:14; 72:12)

### II. God is Righteous in Protecting His People

- 1. In his rescue of them from Egypt
  - a. The victories which accomplished this are described as the righteous acts of God (Judges 5:11; I Sam 12:7)
  - b. The pharaoh himself acknowledged that the ten plagues were evidence of God's righteousness (Ex. 9:27)
- 2. In his redemption of his people from exile
  - a. God showed his righteousness by this deliverance
  - b. This righteousness is closely associated with salvation (Isaiah 45:8; 46:13; 51:5-6)
- 3. In his redemption of his people from sin
  - a. The messianic king is just and having salvation (Zech. 9:9)
  - b. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes; in it is revealed the righteousness of God

## MAIN THOUGHTS

### I. The Prophets Revealed the Righteousness of God

- 1. Man has no righteousness of his own
  - a. It hurts to be told that man's righteousness is but a filthy rag in God's sight

- b. How futile to try to establish our own righteousness by our own works (Isaiah 64:4)
- c. The human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) and therefore cannot produce righteousness acceptable to God
- d. The garment of our own self-righteousness is our pride (Isaiah 64:9)
- e. Man must turn from his own self-righteousness to Christ who was made unto us righteousness (Isaiah 45:8, 24; 46:12-13; 54:17)
- 2. God provided for man what he could not do for himself
  - a. A way to return to Zion
    - (1) He will come and save you (Isaiah 35:4)
    - (2) There shall be streams in the desert (Isaiah 35:6)
    - (3) The highway shall be called the Holy Way (Isaiah 35:8)
    - (4) The ransomed of the Lord shall return (Isaiah 35:10)
  - b. A river shall flow from the sanctuary
    - (1) Everything will live where the river goes (Ezek. 47:9)
    - (2) This river will enable trees to grow with fruit for food and leaves for healing (Ezek. 47:12)
  - c. A fountain shall be opened
    - (1) To cleanse the inhabitants from sin (Ezek. 13:1)
    - (2) To cleanse them from all uncleanness
  - d. A well of salvation will be opened
    - (1) To draw the water of life from
    - (2) To proclaim that his name is exalted
- 3. The prophets revealed the righteous One
  - a. His revealed birth
    - (1) "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14)
    - (2) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6)
  - b. His revealed ministry
    - (1) Beyond Jordan, in Galilee . . . the light shined

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AS MANIFESTED BY THE PROPHETS

(Isaiah 9:1-2)

(2) The Lord shall suddenly come to his temple  
(Malachi 3:1)

(3) Sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Ezek. 37:11; Jer.  
50:6)

(4) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me (Isaiah 61:1)

(5) The eyes of the blind shall be opened (Isaiah 42:7)

### c. His revealed death

(1) They weighed my price thirty pieces of silver  
(Zech. 11:12)

(2) He opened not his mouth (Isaiah 53:7)

(3) They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod  
(Micah 5:1)

(4) He was wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah  
53:5)

(5) He was numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah  
53:9)

(6) He made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah  
53:12)

(7) They shall look upon me whom they have pierced  
(Zech. 12:10)

(8) It shall come to pass on that day, that I will make  
the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the  
earth on a clear day (Amos 8:9)

(9) He would make his grave with the rich (Isaiah  
53:9)

(10) He gave his back to smiters (Isaiah 50:6)

(11) He poured out his soul unto death (Isaiah 53:12)

### d. His revealed resurrection

(1) Thy dead men shall live together . . . they shall  
arise (Ezek. 37:7-10)

(2) Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall  
awake (Dan. 12:2)

(3) In the third day he shall raise us up, and we shall  
live in his sight (Hos. 6:2)

(4) I will ransom them from the power of the grave  
(Hos. 13:14)

## II. The Christ Brought the Righteousness of God

1. Unrighteous man is totally incapable of making himself righteous enough to be accepted by God
2. Jesus brought righteousness to man
  - a. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many" (Isaiah 53:11)
  - b. "The righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17)
  - c. "Unto the Son, God said . . . a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom (Heb. 1:8)
  - d. "To declare his righteousness . . . that he might be just (right) and the justifier (the one who puts right) of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25-26)
  - e. He (Jesus) is righteous (I John 2:29)
3. Jesus was qualified to become our righteousness
  - a. Because he was just and right in all his ways and witness, ever obedient to his righteous Father
  - b. Because he was never crooked in his dealings with others
  - c. Because his life was never out of the least fraction from the plumbline of truth and morality
4. Jesus brought the justice of God
  - a. "Of the increase of his government and peace . . . upon the throne of David . . . to establish it . . . with justice" (Isaiah 9:7)
  - b. "Behold thy king comes . . . he is just" (Zech. 9:9)
  - c. "I judge and my judgment is just" (John 5:30)
  - d. Peter claims him to be just:
    - (1) "You denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14)
    - (2) "Christ . . . the just for the unjust" (I Pet. 3:18)

## III. The Believers are Constituted the Righteousness of God

1. The sinner through believing is constituted the righteousness of God
  - a. The devil cannot call in question the fact that God is



“just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus”  
(Zech. 3:2)

- b. So we can rest secure and serene in the confidence that
  - (1) Christ is our peace—who can disturb it?
  - (2) Christ is our hope—who can destroy it?
  - (3) Christ is our righteousness—who can tarnish it?
- 2. Man's righteousness came by *someone* not *something*
  - a. Even him who possessed Lordship (Mark 12:36-37)
  - b. Righteousness is not earned, it is imputed to man
  - c. Daniel speaks of the wise turning many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3), which means they are brought to God who alone can justify them
  - d. Such righteousness is said to be reckoned or imputed, and put to the account of a guilty sinner accepting God's terms of salvation, Isa. 55:1ff.
  - e. It is reckoned unto man on the ground of Christ's finished work
- 3. Divine righteousness can only become ours by faith in Christ
  - a. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:11)
  - b. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jer. 23:7)
  - c. The righteousness of God by faith (Rom. 3:26; 4:6; II Cor. 5:21)

## CONCLUSION

- I. God's Righteousness is Shown in His Saving of His People
  - 1. The prophets revealed it
  - 2. In Christ he is now doing it
  - 3. His people are no longer a restricted race but include all who believe (Rom. 2:28-29)
  - 4. “As many as call upon the name of the Lord shall be

saved" (Joel 3:32; Acts 2:38-39)

## II. God's Righteousness Declares Righteous Those Who Believe in Jesus

1. God justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:22)
2. It is the righteousness of God that is imparted to man, not man's own self-righteousness that he is to seek after (Phil. 3:9)

## III. God's Righteousness of His People is Based on Redemption Brought by Christ

1. Men are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption (Rom. 3:24)
2. It is a righteousness through forgiveness, based on the blood of Christ (I John 1:7, 9)
3. God put Christ forward as an expiation by his blood to be received by faith (Rom. 3:25)
4. This was to show God's passing over sins aforetime (Rom. 3:24)
5. It was to prove in the present time that He himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26)

## IV. God's Righteousness Provides Manifold Blessings

1. The righteous are blessed with prosperity: "Say you to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doing" (Isaiah 3:10)
2. The righteous are surrounded by divine favor: "For thou, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor will thou compass him as with a shield (Psalm 5:12)
3. The righteous experience deliverance from affliction: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19)
4. The righteous enjoy peace, quietness, and assurance: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isaiah 32:17)

## V. God's Righteousness Provides Hope in His Glory.

1. The time is coming when the heavens will declare his righteousness.
2. When the Sun of Righteousness appears with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2) accompanied by all the heavenly saints, what a glorious consummation that will be of his work on our behalf.
3. The ultimate blessing of righteousness by faith is eternity with Him who is our righteousness. This is the glad hope of the righteous (Malachi 3:17-18).
4. "Hope of righteousness" is the sight of the righteous One himself, who promised to return for his own (John 14:3).

## VIII. COMMUNION THROUGH GOD'S COVENANT CHAPTERS 54 - 59

### A. WED TO THE LORD IN COVENANT RELATIONSHIP CHAPTER 54

#### 1. RECONCILED

TEXT: 54:1-8

- 1 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah.
- 2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.
- 3 For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.
- 4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou

confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth; and the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more.

- 5 For thy Maker is thy husband; Jehovah of hosts is his name: and the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.
- 6 For Jehovah hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God.
- 7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.
- 8 In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting lovingkindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is the "barren" one?
- b. Why "enlarge" the place of her tent?
- c. When did God "forsake" her?

### PARAPHRASE

When the Suffering Servant of God accomplishes His work, O Zion, My covenant people you will sing and shout for joy. You have not been able to produce spiritual offspring; you have been like a childless woman. You have been cast off by your Husband-God because you sinned against Him, but through the reconciling work of the Messiah you shall have more children than you had when you were married. Prepare yourself to accept the expansion of God's kingdom beyond your present nation because through the Messiah, God is going to establish a kingdom that stretches to the ends of the earth. The offspring that shall be given you through the Servant will include people from every nation on the earth. The Servant

will also take away the humiliation of your present barrenness. You will not suffer the reproach of spiritual barrenness again, because the God who created you is also your Husband. The Faithful Covenant God, Jehovah—the Holy One of Israel—The Sovereign, Omnipotent God of all creation—He is your Redeemer. This is the God who has promised to betroth you to Himself through the Servant, even though He has forsaken you and cast you off because of your unfaithfulness. I will cast you off into captivity for only a short time, but My mercy extended to you through the Servant will be great. In a flood of wrath I will turn away from protecting you for a short time, but I will love you and be kind to you forever through the Servant.

### COMMENTS

v. 1-4 REPOPULATED: The result of the Suffering Servant's redemptive work (52:13—53:12) shall be a prolific spiritual offspring. He is to "bring many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10-13). That is why Zion (God's faithful remnant in the O.T. which will become His church in the N.T.) is told to "break forth into singing." The physical descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 17:2-8, etc.) did not produce spiritually as they should have. Most of his offspring turned to idolatry and ungodliness. Jerusalem, the "holy" city, was barren of spiritual children except for a small remnant of faithful (cf. Isa. 8:16). But when the Servant shall have completed His work Israel shall produce spiritual offspring prolifically (cf. Gal. 3:29). Jerusalem cannot produce because God, her Husband has forsaken her on account of her sins. She will be given over to captivity for a season. But the time will come when she will produce more children than a woman who had never been forsaken (cf. Isa. 49:18-26; 51:1-3; Zech. 2:1-5; Hosea 1:10-12). She will produce a "great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues . . ." (Rev. 7:9).

Inasmuch as the "new" Jerusalem (the Messiah's kingdom, the church) is to produce an innumerable offspring, she will need to "enlarge" her "tent." Jehovah instructs the people of Isaiah's day to stretch their faith to accept an expanded concept of the Messiah's kingdom. God is going to extend covenant relationship to more than Jews; He is going to include "the nations." Ezekiel's vision of the glorified temple, land, city and priesthood (Ezek. 40—48) is a graphic, figurative prophecy of the immense enlargement which will be necessary for the coming messianic kingdom. Ezekiel's "temple" was never intended to be literally built. It is hyperbole. The *terumah* ("most holy place" RSV, Ezek. 48:12) measures about 2500 square miles, nearly twice as large as the whole area of geographic Judea! The rebuilt temple (Ezek. 40:2) of Ezekiel was 500 reeds (4500 square feet), larger than the literal Jerusalem of Ezekiel's day or our day. Ezekiel's exaggerated temple, land and city are visionary predictions of the "enlargement" of the messianic age. Micah predicts, "A day for the building of your walls! In that day (the messianic age) the boundary shall be far extended . . ." (Micah 7:11f).

Jehovah's people are to take comfort in the fact that their redemption draws nigh. The finished work of the Servant is now on the prophetic horizon (Isa. 53), therefore, Zion need no longer look upon her temporary captivity and "indignation" with hopelessness. She shall forget all her shame when the Servant comes and takes her shame upon Himself. The reproach associated with barrenness will be forgotten when she begins to produce spiritual children through the gospel. She will then be the church of Christ "without spot or blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

V. 5-8 REUNITED: Through the Servant, Jehovah will reclaim His "wife." Jehovah will be reunited, remarried to His people in a new covenant relationship (cf. Isa. 56:6-8; Jer. 31:27-34; Ezek. 37:24-28; etc.). The Old covenant will pass away and be remembered no more (cf. Jer. 3:15-18). They must remember that the prophet Isaiah is speaking the promise of Almighty God. They must find their reasons for singing and

shouting and for overcoming their shame and hopelessness in the fact that these are promises of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth! Jehovah will call back His forsaken wife (cf. Ezek. 16:53-63; Hosea 1:10-12; 2:14-23; 3:1-5), through the messianic covenant. The Lord will forsake Zion for only a short time (during the “indignation”; see our comments, *Daniel*, Dan. 8:19; 11:36, College Press) compared with the time He will show His great mercy to Zion. The “indignation” will last only 600 years (from the captivities until the Christ). But Jehovah will show *everlasting* lovingkindness to Zion.

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

## QUIZ

1. What is the basis for Zion’s singing and shouting?
2. Where in the Prophets do we have a visionary picture of the “enlargement” of Zion to receive the messianic multitudes?
3. What is the basis of Zion’s being able to forget her shame?
4. How long did God forsake her?

## 2. REGALED

TEXT: 54:9-17

9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee,

nor rebuke thee.

- 10 For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah. that hath mercy on thee.
- 11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.
- 12 And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones.
- 13 And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children.
- 14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee.
- 15 Behold, they may gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee.
- 16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.
- 17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness which is of me, saith Jehovah.

### QUERIES

- a. What do the "waters of Noah" have to do with this text?
- b. Why mention her "stones"?
- c. How shall their righteousness be from Jehovah?

### PARAPHRASE

Your redemption from captivity and salvation through the coming Servant is certain. The covenant relationship through



the Servant is as sure as the covenant I made in the days of Noah when I swore that the waters would no more destroy the earth. So I have now sworn to turn away My anger from you through the atoning work of the Servant. In fact, My covenant through the Servant is even more certain than that! Even if the mountains and hills and the earth pass away, My covenant of reconciliation in the Servant shall never pass away. O you helpless and oppressed Zion, I am going to make you beautiful. I will lay your foundations with sapphires, your towers with rubies, your gates will be built of stones that shine and glow like fire and I will build your walls with precious stones of all kinds. All of your children shall have the privilege of being taught by God Himself. He will come directly from heaven to earth in the flesh. He will bring great peace and prosperity to all your children. You shall be vindicated and declared righteous, O Zion, and you shall be delivered from spiritual oppression and fear; the terror of guilt and judgment shall never come to you again. You will survive all your enemies even though they may conspire to destroy you; they do so against My will and I will destroy them. I create and control those who build weapons; I also create and control those who use weapons against My people. I will not let any weapon or any army completely destroy My Zion. There will be no accusation permitted to stand against you then, because your righteousness shall be imputed to you from Me. This is what I am going to give you, Zion, says the Lord.

## COMMENTS

v. 9-10 **PERMANENCE:** The future reconciliation promised in 54:1-8 is, of course, predicted on the condition that Zion will enter into covenant relationship with Jehovah through the Suffering Servant who is to come. This covenant relationship will be as intimate and precious as a marriage; for that, in fact, is what it will be—the Lord married to His bride (the church) Zion. In the verse before us now, the *permanence* or

*certainty* of that relationship is declared. When the Lord predicts that He will enter into a covenant of reconciliation with Zion, it is as certain to come to pass as His promise not to destroy the world by a flood again.

God's covenant sign to Noah was the rainbow. God's covenant sign of reconciliation was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Jews of Jesus' day were not satisfied by the evidence of His miracles that He came to fulfill the covenant promises made through the prophets. Jesus told them that *one* great sign would be given them (the sign of Jonah; Mt. 12:38-42; Lk. 11:29-32) confirming that He was the Messenger of the Covenant (cf. Mal. 3:1-4). The writer of Hebrews said that when God desired to demonstrate the immutability of His promise of covenant reconciliation, He "interposed" (*emesiteusen*, Gr., Heb. 6:17) with an oath. What God actually did was "interpose" *Himself* as that oath, incarnate in Jesus Christ. All the promises of God find their verification, validation, confirmation and authentication ("Yes" or "Amen") in Christ (cf. II Cor. 1:18-20). The new covenant is one of a "living hope" by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Pet. 3:3-5). The surety of God's new covenant does not originate subjectively within man. It does not have its basis in man's ability to earn surety through self-righteousness. The surety of God's reconciliation is in God's objective, historical "interposition" in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We appropriate it by faith and may experience it subjectively, but its certainty is in its objectivity and historicity! The confirmation of God's new covenant is even more certain than the confirmation of the covenant made to Noah. Mountains and hills, heaven and earth, rainbows and clouds may pass away (and most certainly will), but Christ conquered death and lives forever. The Word of God, confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, abides forever (Mt. 5:17-20; 24:35; I Pet. 1:22-25). God through Isaiah, is promising Zion that she shall be cast off for a little while but she will be reconciled to Him later (through the Servant) in an eternal marriage. He has sworn it will come to pass. God does not lie. His word is sure!

v. 11-12 **PRECIOUSNESS:** When this "marriage" takes place between God and His new Zion, the bride (the church) will be regaled in beauty. The old Zion, having degraded itself with idolatry and paganism (Jer. 18:12-17, etc.), is about to be taken captive and made a "byword" among the nations. The old Zion will suffer shame, humiliation and mocking. The old Zion will be loathed as a harlot (cf. Ezek. 16:1-52), but Jehovah will restore her fortunes and make her the beautiful, new Zion (Ezek. 16:53-63).

The Hebrew word *puk* in verse 11 is translated "fair colors" but might be more accurately translated "antimony" because the Hebrew word apparently refers to a mineral powder used as an eye pigment (cf. II Kings 9:30) which was also mixed with a liquid to make a cement or paste in which stones or jewels might be set. This *puk* would make a setting that would enhance the beauty of the jewels. That is the point of the passage. *Peniyniym* is the Hebrew word for *rubies* (they are red); *sappiyrwym* are *sapphires* (they are blue-green); *aekeddakh* is Hebrew for *carbuncles* (they are also brilliant red) and the word more literally means simply, *sparkling*. The new Zion will be beautiful and precious. Peter must have had this in mind when he wrote I Pet. 2:4-10! Christ's church is precious and pure (Eph. 5:25-27). The best human words available to John to describe the extravagant beauty of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-21) were words describing jewels and precious stones. Of course, the "precious stones" will be purified, sanctified Christians who are "living stones" in whom the Spirit of the living God abides (cf. Eph. 2:19-22).

v. 13-17 **PROTECTION:** The phrase, "... taught of Jehovah" is quoted by Jesus (Jn. 6:45) in His sermon on The Bread of Life. It is therefore a prediction of the Messiah. Isaiah was predicting the Incarnation! Jesus Christ was "the bread come down out of heaven." The new Zion would be established and continually sustained by "eating" the incarnated Bread from Heaven. The new Zion would have the privilege of being taught directly by God in the flesh. The old Zion had only "divers portions and divers manners" of God's revelation through the

prophets (Heb. 1:1), but in the messianic age the new Zion would be spoken to by God Incarnate in the Son. Anyone taught by Jesus is taught by God Himself.

The protection God is promising Zion here is essentially spiritual. It should be clearly understood by any student of the New Testament that Christians are never promised complete deliverance from wars, sicknesses, trials and tribulations. All who live godly in this world will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). The prophets never promised the Jewish people a time when they would be free of physical tribulation on this earth. The promise that Zion shall be "far from oppression" is a promise of freedom from spiritual oppression (guilt, fear of judgment). The new Zion will be founded in righteousness (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-16, etc.). The imputed righteousness of God because of the atoning death of Christ will free the new Zion from guilt and fear of judgment. The Lord will protect His church and the gates of eternal death shall never prevail against it because Christ will partake of flesh and blood and destroy the power of the devil which is the fear of death (cf. Heb. 2:14-18; Isa. 25:6-9). In verses 15-17 the prophet clearly predicts that Zion will suffer physical attacks as well as judgmental accusations (probably referring to the chief slanderer himself, the devil), but none of it shall prevail against God's new Zion. God is the Creator of everything and everyone. He is able to control all His creation and use it to fulfill His ultimate purpose which is the redemption of those who come into covenant relationship to Him through the Servant. And He will do so! Zion's future righteousness cannot be gainsaid. The accuser of all mankind cannot hurt God's new Zion with his accusations. The heritage of new Zion shall be the perfect righteousness of God Himself, which God has given her by His grace through His Servant. The Hebrew word *tsedek* is able to be translated righteousness or justness. The meaning in this text apparently has more of the flavor of justification, vindication or exoneration. God's new Zion will be cleared of all guilt and be given God's righteousness through her covenant marriage in the Servant.

## QUIZ

1. Upon what is the future reconciliation of Zion to the Lord predicated?
2. How certain is the Lord's promise of reconciliation toward Zion?
3. What is the sign of that reconciliation?
4. How did God swear an oath of that reconciliation in the New Testament?
5. How does Isaiah speak of the future beauty of new Zion?
6. How will God vindicate and justify and protect the new Zion?

B. WORD OF THE LORD IS BOND AND BOUNDS  
OF COVENANT, CHAPTER 55

1. EVIDENCE

TEXT: 55:1-5

- 1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.
- 2 Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.
- 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.
- 4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.
- 5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

## QUERIES

- a. Why offer water, wine and milk for no money?
- b. What are the "sure mercies of David"?
- c. Who is going to call the unknown nation?

## PARAPHRASE

Attention, Come to the water of life everyone who is thirsting for righteousness; it will be given to you freely. You may obtain refreshment, joy and nourishment and you will need no money because it will come to you by the grace of God. Why do my people spend all their lives trying to buy satisfaction for their souls from that which can never satisfy? Listen to Me and obey My word and you will be filled with goodness and your soul will be satisfied. Pay attention to what I am saying to you, Zion, be obedient, and you shall have eternal life for I am preparing to make an eternal covenant with you which shall prove My faithfulness and fulfill all the promises I made to your forefather, David. Look! I have promised My Servant for a herald of good news to the whole world; He will be the King and the Prophet I promised. And you, Zion, will call to share the kingdom of God with you a people which you formerly considered outside the kingdom of God. Yes, people from Gentile nations will hasten to make themselves members of Zion motivated by the glorious redemption of Jehovah through the Holy One of Israel. That will result in the glory of God being manifested in Zion!

## COMMENTS

v. 1-2 FAVOR: Redemption has been predicted and explained as occurring in the Suffering Servant (ch. 53). The invitation has been extended for participation in that redemption through covenant relationship (ch. 54). Now the bond and bounds of

that covenant relationship is declared to be in the word of Jehovah which is faithful and powerful. All who realize their need of the substance of life are invited to come and receive freely. In Palestine where water-wells were few and far between and where water had to be purchased for money, this would be an exceptionally arresting figure of speech! Water, wine and milk are used throughout the O.T. as figures of spiritual blessings. The same elements are used in the N.T. by Christ and His apostles to portray the blessings of God's grace. The point of these verses is that God's provision of redemption through the Servant shall be by *grace*. Peter makes it plain that the O.T. prophets predicted salvation by grace (I Pet. 1:10-12). Paul's treatise to the Romans declares that justification before God is by faith. Paul, of course, knows that our salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:1-10), but it is faith that gives us access into that grace (Rom. 5:2). And Paul said the O.T. prophets (and the O.T. law) bore witness to salvation by grace through faith (Rom. 3:21-26). Water is figurative for salvation (cf. Isa. 12:3; 35:7; 41:17-18; 49:10; Psa. 42:1; 36:9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 13:1; 14:8; Jn. 4:7-26; 7:37-38, etc.). Wine is figurative for exhilaration and enjoyment (cf. Isa. 26:6-9, etc.). Milk is figurative for nourishment (cf. Isa. 7:22; 60:16; Joel 3:18; I Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 2:2, etc.). It was not astonishing to the Jews that Jehovah would be gracious to them. What was astonishing to many was that He would grant them mercy without their having earned it. Most of them rationalized that they earned whatever graciousness God would shower upon them. Actually the Law was intended to teach Israel that she could never, by human merit, earn her justification before the Holy One of Israel. Israel should have known from the Law that her salvation rested in the unmerited favor of Jehovah. But Israel for the most part, was too wrapped up in her self-righteousness. She was spending herself, exhausting herself in trying to earn righteousness through keeping laws and traditions. That is a vain quest! Attempting to attain justification before God by human goodness is frustratingly impossible and only compounds the human dilemma of guilt. The only

solution that will satisfy the human soul is faith in the vicarious, substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ. That solution cannot be reasoned out; it cannot be explained by anything within the human experience, because it is supra-human; it is supernatural. It can only be believed. Believed, of course, on the basis of the historical verification and validation of its efficacy by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection is the only fact that makes the cross of Christ (His atoning death) believable! This is predicted in ch. 53 (see our comments there). The exhortation of the prophet here is for Zion (true believers) to focus its attention on the promises of God that they may have salvation by *grace*. All attempts to be saved any other way will fail!

v. 3-5 FIDELITY: Next, the prophet calls upon Zion to give its attention to the promise of Jehovah that He is going to verify His fidelity in a future covenant relationship which will be everlasting. The future covenant will not become obsolete like the old covenant which has a stated termination (cf. Jer. 3:15-18; Jer. 31:31-34, etc.), or fulfillment. The future covenant will be eternal; it will bring into being the "sure mercies of David" (the promise of an eternal king to sit upon David's throne for ever) (cf. II Sam. 7). This is fulfilled, according to the inspired apostle Paul, in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. "What God promised to the fathers . . ." He fulfilled by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and proclaiming through Jesus the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 13:32-40). The atonement is the promise (Isa. 53), and God's *faithfulness* to keep His promise of atonement through Jesus was *verified* once and for all by raising Jesus from the dead! The empirically demonstrated everlasting life of Jesus validates God's non-empirical promise to remove our guilt, if we believe and accept God's covenant terms. The forgiveness of our sins is not *based* on our feelings, but upon empirical verification of the faithfulness and sovereignty of God, the Son. When we acknowledge and trust in that verified faithfulness, then we may have a legitimate experiential *feeling* of guiltlessness.

Inasmuch as the apostle Paul quoted (or paraphrased) Isaiah



55:3 in Acts 13:34, and plainly indicates it was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must look upon this whole chapter of Isaiah as messianic. Therefore, the "him" of 55:4 is the Messiah (the Servant) who has been given as a "witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples." The Hebrew word translated *leader* is *nagiyd* which means *prince* and is the same word used in Daniel 9:25-26 (see our comments there). The word *metsaveh* is Hebrew for *commander* and comes from *mitsvah* or *commandment*. Thus the one to be given for a witness to the nations will be a ruler and a commandment-giver (cf. Isa. 54:13). This probably refers to the twofold messianic office of King-Prophet. In Isaiah 53, the Servant makes intercession and thus becomes the Messiah-Priest. Zion must be apprised of the fact that Jehovah's future eternal covenant will be validated by The One who is Prophet-Priest-and-King. Furthermore, Jehovah's covenant will be secured by this One for all peoples!

Since the Servant comes through Zion, she will be given the privilege of "calling" nations she formerly "knew not" in covenant relationship. Nations that "knew not" Zion in covenant relationship shall, when the Prophet-King-Priest comes, "run" to her because Jehovah is who He is and will have verified that His covenant is universal through the work of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 2:3-4; 19:16-25; 45:14; 45:22-25; 49:12; 60:3-6; 66:18; Zech. 8:20-23; Lk. 24:47). It was in the same Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia where Paul quoted Isaiah 55:3 that he also told the recalcitrant Jews that the covenant of the Lord was for the Gentiles to whom he would thenceforth go and preach (Acts 13:42-52).

## QUIZ

1. What is the main point of verses one and two?
2. How do men have access to the grace of God?
3. How much does the O.T. say about the grace of God?
4. What is the only thing that makes the atoning aspect of the

death of Christ believable?

5. How do we know this context points to the Messiah?

6. How did Jehovah establish the faithfulness of His promises?

7. In what sense will Zion call a nation it does not know?

## 2. EXTENT

TEXT: 55:6-13

- 6 Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:
- 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah.
- 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- 10 For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
- 11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
- 12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
- 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-trees; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

## QUERIES

- a. Why does Isaiah exhort his audience to seek Jehovah?
- b. Why mention the word of God here?
- c. How do mountains and hills sing?

## PARAPHRASE

Believe what the Lord says about His Servant and His covenant, O Zion, and seek Him in faith while the opportunity to do so is still yours. Those who are rebelliously and wickedly pursuing lives of worldliness, assuming that the Lord's covenant promises are not going to come to pass had better forsake their unbelief and turn back to Jehovah. Trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah is the only source of mercy for the sinner; and that mercy will be abundant. You may not understand all I am saying about My Servant and His covenant of grace, but that is because my thoughts are not completely reducible to human experiences and concepts, says the Lord. My sovereign program and plan of redemption through My Servant and His Covenant is beyond human wisdom. But just as rain and snow falling from heaven have life in themselves and are the source of life for physical vegetation on the earth, so My Word has spiritual life in it. When I promise forgiveness only through My Servant and His covenant it shall be so. My word will produce eternal life through an eternal covenant. Do not think that the imminent captivity of Zion by Babylon is going to stop My promises from coming to pass. Your redemption from captivity by My sovereign purpose will eventuate in an everlasting covenant of joy and peace for Zion. Indeed, even nature itself shall ultimately be redeemed through My sovereign word. When this covenant is fulfilled it will be a sign that will last forever, a reminder of what I, Jehovah, have done.

## COMMENTS

v. 6-7 REPENTANCE: The favor (grace) and the faithfulness (verified in the work of the Servant) of Jehovah's promised everlasting covenant is appropriated through repentance in accordance with the revealed word of God. Great numbers of the people in Isaiah's day were choosing to believe that Jehovah was not, indeed, could not, ever make good on bringing to pass His glorious promises to the fathers. The rich and powerful really did not want God to interfere with their worldliness. They wanted Jehovah to get out of their lives (cf. Isa. 30—31). The prediction of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13—53:12) was unacceptable then as later. So Isaiah's exhortation to Zion is, "Believe what the Lord says about His Servant and His covenant and turn to Him while you still have the opportunity to do so!" Many of them would die in the captivity that was coming. If they did not turn in faith and repentance to the promises of Jehovah of atonement through the Servant, they would die in their sins. Isaiah believed and saw the glory of the Christ (Jn. 12:38). If he could, why couldn't other Jews of his day? Because they chose to pursue a worldly scheme of salvation. They chose to believe in idolatry or alliances with foreign military powers. Isaiah calls upon his people to change their minds and forsake their wicked ways, and to put their confidence in God's promises that He will work out their salvation through His Servant. Before they can claim His promise of pardon, they must make up their minds they want it. They must choose. If they choose to trust God's way of salvation, they may find it in His salvation.

v. 8-11 REVELATION: The sovereign plan of God for the redemption of the world is beyond the experience of man. That God Himself could become incarnate and live a perfect life (without sin in a fleshly body) and then willingly allow Himself to be "made sin" on sinful man's behalf so that man might be given an imputed righteousness which man does not deserve, is incomprehensible to man because man has no experiential base from which to comprehend such an event. The cross is a

stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (cf. I Cor. 1:18—2:15; see also Special Study, "The Wisdom of God," pgs. 309-322). God's plan to redeem man through The Servant and His New Covenant is a challenge to the pride of man who believes he can secure his own salvation by his own wisdom. Therefore, man refuses to accept God's plan because God's plan is beyond man's wisdom. But that is just the point—God's plan is a revelation. Habakkuk had this problem. He could not understand why God would punish the Jews by the Chaldeans. But God told Habakkuk, in effect, "I do not ask, Habakkuk, that you understand it, but that you believe it and accept it!" The apostle Paul quoted from Habakkuk in Romans 1:16-17. The gospel of God cannot be understood by man, it must be simply believed and accepted.

There is, however, a tangible point of contact between the incomprehensible, unsearchable mind of God and the mind of finite man. That is the revealed word of God. If man will believe the word of God and conform his actions to the covenant terms of God's revealed word, he shall have redemption. The word of God is authenticated and validated by supernatural proofs seen by eyewitnesses and transmitted in human language under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God. So faith in the revelation of God is not a subjective leap without an objective basis. And God promises that His word is dynamic—it is *living* (Heb. 4:12-13). His revealed word is the *source* of our spiritual life, (cf. John 6:63; I Pet. 1:22-25; James 1:18, 21, etc.). God's word produces life like the rain and snow produces vegetation. That is one of the evidences upon which we may base our faith in God even though we may not understand His ways. We see His word produce goodness and life. Man believes many things he does not fully understand (electricity, gravity, personality, atomic structure and behavior). Man believes and acts upon those principles because of objective evidence he has seen to establish their reality. So, man can believe and act upon the revealed precepts and principles of God in the Bible, even though he may not understand them.

The point of these words of Isaiah is to encourage the Jews

of his day that covenant relationship to God in the work of the Servant may not be completely comprehensible, but this relationship has as its bond the historical deeds of God for evidence and has as its bounds, the propositional (verbal) revelation of God in human language. Covenant relationship to God is through the Servant according to the precepts of God's written word. Anything less than that is too little; anything more is too much. God has spoken through Isaiah and the other prophets that He is going to fulfill His covenant in the Servant. God's word will accomplish that for which it is sent!

v. 12-13 REJOICING: The graphic picture of the whole creation rejoicing at Zion's redemption in these verses may be hyperbolic description of release from the Babylonian captivity. Contextually, however, it is a figurative description of the rejoicing the whole creation is going to enter into when the whole creation is redeemed through the work of the Servant (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). When that redemption which the Servant accomplished is finally consummated at the creation of a new heavens and new earth there will be cosmic jubilation. Paradise will be restored and the curse which brought thorns and thistles upon the original earth (Gen. 3:17-19) will be removed. It is through the work of the Servant that man's dominion over creation has been *potentially* regained *now* (cf. Heb. 2:5-9). Isaiah, by the Spirit of God, saw all this. No wonder he burst forth into such beautiful hyperbole! All of this shall cause the name of Jehovah to be exalted forever and ever.

## QUIZ

1. How is the favor of God appropriated?
2. Were people of Isaiah's day capable of believing and turning to the promise of atonement through the Servant?
3. Why are God's ways beyond man's comprehension?
4. May we believe something we do not understand?
5. Is belief a "leap in the dark"? Why not?
6. What is the ultimate goal of the rejoicing mentioned in vv. 12-13?

## THE WISDOM OF GOD

### THE WISDOM OF GOD

OBC Chapel Sermon

by Paul T. Butler

“. . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God . . .”  
I Cor. 1:22-24

“He (Christ) is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption . . .” I Cor. 1:30

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. WHAT IS WISDOM?

- A. Some ancient philosophers believed man was incapable of wisdom that it was only attainable by God (Socrates). In fact, Socrates said the wise man will not seek wisdom.
  - 1. Yet, most men have continued to seek wisdom; and all of their own.
  - 2. Many of the ancients were driven to despair, cynicism and hopelessness because they could never find wisdom.
  - 3. THEY LEARNED A LOT OF THINGS, BUT THEY COULD NEVER FIND WISDOM.
- B. Solomon (in Eccl.) probably tried every human source available and concluded that the hope of finding wisdom was vain!
- C. Because wisdom is, as one modern philosopher has said, “Whatever else wisdom may be, it is in some sense an understanding of life.” Abraham Kaplan, in *The Pursuit of Wisdom, The Scope of Philosophy*, pub. Glencoe Press, pg. 16. “Wisdom is a matter of seeing things—but *as they are, not subjectively.*”

## II. MAN'S TROUBLE WITH WISDOM

- A. He has been deceived by the devil that wisdom may be found in knowing evil as well as good.
- B. God, man's creator, plainly told man that wisdom was in truth, goodness, humility, righteousness, holiness, purity.
- C. But the devil, Gen. 3, convinced man that if he would partake of the forbidden, he would be as wise as God knowing both good and evil!
- D. The biggest lie of all is, of course, that man is wise if he dispenses with God. Wisdom is found in freedom from any and all divine meddling in man's attempt to enjoy life.
- E. Modern philosophy (from Nietzsche on) declared the death of God and began to construct utopia on earth through science, politics, education and economics, and psychology.
- F. But the "wisdom" of man brought on economic depression, war, illiteracy, exploitation, pollution, and on and on.

H. G. Wells, a believer in the sufficiency of science, had earlier prepared blue prints for Utopia, entitled his *last* book, *Mind at the End of its Tether* and said, "Homo sapiens, as he has been pleased to call himself, is played out."

Others are saying, "Man is a useless passion." "Meaning is found in meaninglessness." "There is no meaning to life."

## DISCUSSION

### I. POWER OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. It destroys false wisdom which enslaves and destroys people and society.



## THE WISDOM OF GOD

1. We have seen through Francis Schaeffer's films the power of the Word and Wisdom of God moving through societies and cultures, redeeming society and individuals.
2. The wisdom of God redeems, regenerates and transforms men and reunites them with their Creator for the blessed end for which He created them (Heb. 2).
3. It converted Pharisees, publicans, harlots, cruel soldiers, pagan philosophers and politicians.
4. It changed homosexuals, thieves, murderers, drunkards, fornicators and liars in the decadent city of Corinth into people after the image of Christ (I Cor. 6:9-11).
5. In the late 1700's the mutineers on the British ship, *Bounty*, landed on Pitcairn Island in the South Seas. With some of the native women they established a settlement which rivaled Sodom and Gomorrah for its iniquity. Sometime later while rummaging through a sailor's chest, the sole survivor of the mutineers, Alexander Smith, came across a Bible. He made it the textbook and standard of conduct for the community. When an American whaler landed there in 1808, the crew found an ideal commonwealth governed by Smith. No illiterates, thieves, liars, drunkards, profaners, adulterers, or murderers cast their stigma on the community, but righteousness and its fruits of happiness blossomed everywhere. A single copy of Scripture transformed that tropical cesspool into a moral paradise.

What has human wisdom, separated from God done for the world? It has created a Nietzsche and a Hitler, a Marx and a Stalin.

Human wisdom, separated from God, decays, degenerates and destroys! It destroys humanness, socialness and nature!

Take all the military force, economic wealth, erudite philosophy, theology aristocracy, cultural refinement and put it all together in one human system and you still do not have power worthy to be compared with the transforming power of the wisdom of God, incarnated in Jesus and inscripturated in the Bible!

TAKE IT IN YOUR HAND, LEARN IT WITH YOUR MIND, RECEIVE IT INTO YOUR HEART AND PROCLAIM IT WITH YOUR LIPS AND LIFE!

**B. It builds and sustains Life as God intended Life for man.**

1. It restores man to fellowship with His Creator; puts man in harmony with his fellow man; puts man in harmony with creation.
2. Man learns where he came from; what his reason for existence is; and what his destiny is.
3. The wisdom of God explains history; gives purpose and solves the fragmentation of life without God.
4. All the experiences of human life (suffering, pain, evil, joy, goodness, truth, falsehood, ugliness) are inexplicable, frustrating and maddening without the Word of God. All human experience is epitomized and sanctified and explained in the life of the perfect human, Jesus.
5. Christ has given us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Pet. 2). He came and partook of our nature to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2).

A real note found by a real policeman:

"To anyone in the world who cares. Who am I? Why am I living? Where am I going? Life has become stupid and purposeless. Nothing makes sense anymore. The questions I had when I came to college are still unanswered and now I am convinced that there are no answers. There can only be pain

and guilt and despair here. My fear of death and the unknown is far less terrifying than the prospect of the unbearable frustrations, futility, and hopelessness of continued existence."

Glancing at the lifeless, sheet-draped form on the bed, the officer shrugs his shoulders heavily and turns away. For him it is routine—just another suicide. For the ambulance crew it is routine—just another DOA. And, tragically, it is becoming all too routine all over America, especially on college campuses.

*In contrast:*

Charlie Powell was student body president of the University of California at Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement and at the height of that crisis made a decision for Christ. Looking back, he said, "for the first time in my life I began to see that, if Jesus Christ were really the person He claimed to be, then He had the answers to my problems as student body president as well as in my own personal life."

C. It produces unity among believers in the kingdom of God.

1. It is interesting that Paul says it is the wisdom of God alone which brings unity and on the other hand the practice of unity gives evangelistic power to the gospel (1:17).
2. If ever the world is to be convinced of Christ's saving power, the unity of believers will have a great deal to do with it!
3. And yet churchmen and theologians keep insisting on trying everything under the sun to promote unity except the Word of God!
4. The church at Corinth was trying many things to make the congregation a happy, unified, successful,

respected congregation—BUT WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS CAUSING MORE DIVISION THAN UNITY.

- a. Forming parties and groups following famous men
- b. Showing off how much more sanctified they were than others by comparing miraculous gifts

BUILDINGS, BUDGETS AND BANQUETS . . . PROGRAMS, PROMOTIONAL GIMMICKS AND ENTERTAINMENT ARE NOT UNITY, NOT PROOF OF UNITY, NOR CAN THEY SUSTAIN UNITY. Those things are sometimes good and useful as means, but are also sometimes harmful . . . I've seen more division and fighting over buildings, budgets and programs than I care to recollect.

I've seen church people come to church "fellowship" dinners and separate themselves from other members and never speak because of unconverted hate and unforgiveness!

ONLY THE POWER OF THE CONVERTING WISDOM OF GOD WILL BRING UNITY.

## II. PROPOGATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD (Its transmission to men)

- A. The wisdom of God cannot be reduced to and bound by human wisdom!
  1. Not in human art, not in human music, not in human sermons!
  2. None of these dare claim the inspiration or verbal inerrancy of the Holy Spirit!
  3. The primary reason for this is that the wisdom of God—the redemptive program of God—is outside human experience. That a sinless, Incarnate God, should willingly die for a sinful world, is humanly inexplicable.
  4. Not only that, it is moral outrage to human pride. THIS IS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR UNBELIEF . . . FOR RESISTANCE TO THE WORD AND WISDOM OF GOD.
  5. I've quoted so many times in my class, the little excerpt from Bishop Oxenam in Baker's *Dictionary of Theology* article on Atonement, "The doctrine of

## THE WISDOM OF GOD

the atonement to me is immoral. . . . That someone else should atone for my sins is immoral. . . . they are my sins, I will atone for them."

6. Of course, through human forms of expression we may point people toward, and motivate them toward the wisdom of God found in His Word, but it is still the plain, uncluttered, Word of God that does the begetting of the Spirit . . . not our eloquence, or expertise.

HUMAN SERMONS, HUMAN MUSIC, HUMAN ART, HUMAN METHODS, COME AND GO, BUT THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER!

B. The wisdom of God is undiscoverable—it *has* to be revealed.

1. God is a Person, an objective person, just like I am a person and you are persons, but God is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, while I am finite.
2. Now finite man cannot even know the mind of another finite person unless that mind is revealed to him either by directly talking and acting in one another's presence or by communicating through writing to one another.

If I should want to know what a man's mind is on some subject, I have to let him tell me. I can't ask anyone else; I can't guess; I can't find it within myself subjectively.

Almost every time we say, "I just have this feeling that this is what God wants me to do," it is usually what we want to do. . . . It is presumptuous to say, "I just have this feeling that this is what so-and-so would want me to do."

HOW MUCH MORE PRESUMPTUOUS FOR US TO SAY, "I HAVEN'T REALLY SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES ABOUT THIS, I JUST FEEL LIKE IT HAS GOD'S APPROVAL!"

NOW THE QUESTION IS, "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD . . ."

THE NATURAL MAN DOES NOT RECEIVE THE MIND OF CHRIST . . . THAT IS, THE NON-APOSTLE, DOES NOT RECEIVE THE MIND OF CHRIST, IN A REVELATORY MANNER.

All Calvinistic commentaries, I know, say I Cor. 2:14-16 to the unconverted man not able to understand spiritual things . . . that is contextually erroneous as well as unsuited to the teaching of the Bible as a whole.

How can the invitation be to "whosoever will" if one must wait for the miracle of Holy Spirit quickening of the mind before we can understand the gospel message? What is the point of preaching if we must preach and then hope the Holy Spirit will quicken the mind apart from the Word so the man may understand?

THE POINT IS THAT ONLY THE APOSTLES RECEIVED THE REVELATION OF GOD, THE MIND OF GOD, TO TRANSMIT TO ALL MANKIND FOR ALL AGES!

David Lipscomb paraphrases: "Who of you uninspired hath known the mind of God, so as to be joined together with Him? But we inspired men so understand him that we are united in him in teaching his will, we are laborers together with God."

The whole trend and meaning of the chapter is that none could know or teach the will of God by human wisdom. They were dependent upon the revelation made by God's Spirit through the apostles for a knowledge of His will, and only through receiving this could any become co-workers with Him in saving men.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO TEST THAT WHICH CLAIMS TO BE THE MIND OF CHRIST. . . . DOES IT AGREE WITH APOSTOLIC REVELATION. . . . I Jn. 4:1-6

It is one thing to say, "I am persuaded by historico-grammatical study that this is what the biblical author has revealed to be the mind of God. . . ." and quite another thing to say, I've put it before the Lord and He revealed to me that I should do this or that.

C. The wisdom of God is revealed only through the apostles,

but in human terms . . . in human words

1. The will, the mind, the Person of God came in flesh. Jesus was the Incarnate God, and the Incarnate Holy Spirit. ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GOD-HEAD DWELT IN HIM BODILY!
2. He was the Word of God, Jn. 1:1-18, in human form.
3. The words He spoke were the words of God, the mind of God, the wisdom of God.
4. The words He gave the apostles after He ascended back into heaven, through the work of the Holy Spirit, are just as powerful in redeeming and saving and regenerating as they were when He was here in the flesh. . . .
5. Jn. 6:63; II Pet. 1:3-5 . . . through this word (promises) we are made partakers of the divine nature; II Tim. 3:16-17, they may make the man of God complete! I Jn. 3:24, they complete our fellowship with Christ.

THE WORD OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE APOSTLES IS THE SAME WORD AS THE INCARNATE WORD. . . . IT HAS THE SAME AUTHORITY. IT HAS THE SAME POWER!

WE NEED NO FURTHER REVELATIONS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT! WE DON'T EVEN NEED ANY MORE MIRACLES TO CONFIRM THAT IT IS THE WORD AND WILL AND MIND OF GOD!

Some will say, "There is no power in the words on this printed page of the Bible, the power is in the Person. . . ."

Be careful of such statements. Of course, we do not worship a book, but you can no more separate the words on the Bible's pages from the Person than you can separate the words of any man from his person! THE WORD OF CHRIST IS THE MIND OF CHRIST, THE WORD IS THE POWERFUL, ENERGIZED AGENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION AND SANCTIFICATION!

By the word, Paul begat the Corinthians. The word is the incorruptible seed. The word is implanted. Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth. If we abide in His commandments

we abide in Him and He in us. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The word that I have spoken to you is Spirit and life. The miracle of regeneration occurs through the Word.

WE HAVE LOST RESPECT FOR THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE WORD. . . . Jesus said, "All authority . . . etc., Go and make disciples . . . teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you . . ."

THERE IS AN INSIDIOUS GRASPING FOR HUMAN AUTONOMY IN CHRISTENDOM TODAY THAT IS JUST AS UNBELIEVING AS THAT RATIONALISTIC HUMANISM OF A CENTURY AGO . . .

IT IS SUBJECTIVISM . . . HOW I FEEL . . . MY EXPERIENCE . . . RATHER THAN WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY! You see that evaluates the Bible by my feeling or my experience rather than evaluating my feeling-experience by what the Bible actually says.

*Full Gospel Business Men's International* lead article claims the whole movement built first on the experiences, testimonies, of alleged, extra-biblical workings of the Holy Spirit . . . and what the Bible says follows that second in importance.

A missionary's paper points out how some of the Pentecostals in Chile teach their people that much study of the Bible is a sin. They are opposing the work of Christ and the Bible correspondence work because they declare that the Holy Spirit will teach them without having to read or study the Word of God!

This leads some to believe that God does all our thinking and deciding for us. We don't even have to decide. But that would keep us immature, moral runts.

### III. PURPOSE OF THE WISDOM OF GOD, I Cor. 3-4

A. To build the temple of God by begetting Christians through the gospel and by edifying them through the apostolic doctrine.

1. The purpose of the wisdom of God is NOT:

a. To erect a brain-washed, psyched, structured, non-thinking American corporation!

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A COMMUNITY OF



## THE WISDOM OF GOD

OBEDIENT BELIEVERS STRUCTURED ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, BUT UNSTRUCTURED WHERE THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT SPEAK AND FREE TO THINK AND GROW MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST!

- b. To form a society through which man may build a physical, material utopia on this present earth! THE GOSPEL IS PRIMARILY TO REGENERATE MINDS AND SAVE SOULS IN SPITE OF PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. . . . Of course, Christian love wants to relieve physical suffering and wherever it can it should. But first priority is preaching the Word.
  - c. Just to Christianize society to save a human culture. THE WISDOM OF GOD IS TO CALL OUT AND SAVE FROM ALL DYING CULTURES, "A PEOPLE OF HIS OWN WHO ARE ZEALOUS FOR GOOD DEEDS."
  - d. To make men famous. WHEN MEN USE THE PULPIT TO GAIN PERSONAL FAME AND FOLLOWING, THEY EMPTY THE CROSS OF ITS POWER (I Cor. 1:17). HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A TENDENCY TO THINK OF THE CHURCH AND HER LEADERS AS THEY DO HUMAN LEADERS! PAUL FOUGHT THAT IN CORINTH AND EPHEBUS, AND ROME, AND COLOSSAE AND THESSALONICA AND EVERYWHERE HE WENT.
- B. To make men truly wise through humility
- 1. I Cor. 3:18-22. "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you think that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise."
  - 2. Humility is the queen of virtues.
  - 3. PRIDE IS THE CAUSE OF UNBELIEF. Unbelief is not because God hasn't given enough evidence. We don't need more evidence, we need MORE HUMILITY.

IF YOU LEAVE THESE CLASSROOMS KNOWING THE BIBLE AND KNOWING HOW TO PREACH IT . . . BUT PROUD AND ARROGANT . . . YOU DO NOT HAVE THE WISDOM OF GOD!

- C. To teach man how to live (I Cor. 3:6) according to the scripture

## ISAIAH

### 1. NOT TO GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN

2. Dean Seth Wilson has a little printed essay entitled, "What the Bible Does Not Say About a Christian's Life and Conduct."

HE ASKS, "IS THERE ANY PART OF LIFE ON WHICH THE BIBLE HAS NO TEACHING?"

HE ANSWERS, "No!"

There are precepts and principles in the Bible to cover every aspect of human life. "... all things that pertain to life and godliness . . ."

## CONCLUSION

### I. THE VILLAGE THAT LIVES BY THE BIBLE

November, 1960, *Reader's Digest*:

Soldiers in 1945 found this village which had been formed from two men converted by a missionary who left them a Bible and a hymn book. "Picking their way through the Bible, the two converts had found not only a Person on whom to pattern a life, but sound precepts on which to base their society. . . . Nurtured on this Book a whole generation had drawn from it their ideas . . . the result was plain to see. Shimabuku for years had had no jail, no brothel, no drunkenness, no divorce; there was a high level of health and happiness. . . .

The soldiers attended a worship service and observed the lives of the people for a few days.

A sergeant whispered to his lieutenant, "So this is what comes out of only a Bible and couple of old guys who wanted to live like Jesus! . . . then, with a glance at a shell hole, he murmured, "Maybe we're using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!"

### II. THE WISDOM OF GOD IS POWERFUL: THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL BECAUSE IT IS THE REVELATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. If you think words and ideas are not powerful, think of

- what Adolph Hitler did with lies, words. Marx and Lenin have captured more than two-thirds of the total population of the world with false ideas expressed through words.
- B. The gospel is infinitely more powerful than all those put together.

A. Campbell said, "The work of redemption is a system of work, or deeds, on the part of Heaven, which constitute the most splendid series of moral facts which man or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or moral prototype, they delineate or stamp the image of God upon the human soul."

Mr. Campbell goes on to point out that it is through the preaching of the gospel and through man's obedience to the scriptures (the revelation of the works and deeds of God) that the image of God is stamped upon the soul of man and through no other means.

"The love of God in the death of Christ never drew a tear of gratitude or joy from any eye, or excited a grateful emotion in any heart among the nations of our race to whom the testimony never came." (*The Christian System*, pg. 90-102. "Fact, Testimony, Faith, Feeling.")

### III. BUT THE INFINITE POWER OF THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL WILL PRODUCE NOTHING IF IT IS NOT PROCLAIMED. . . . Leaven will not make bread if it is not put into contact with the lump.

THAT IS WHAT OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED TO DO. . . . FILL MEN AND WOMEN WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF CHRIST IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE AND SEND THEM FORTH TO DECLARE THE WISDOM OF GOD TO A FOOLISH AND DYING WORLD!

THAT IS WHAT FACULTY AND STAFF HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO. . . . THAT IS WHAT PEOPLE SUPPORT THE COLLEGE FOR. . . . THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE RECRUITED YOU FOR. . . . IF YOU HAVE COME FOR ANY OTHER REASON THAN THAT, YOU

ARE SHORT OF THE MARK.

I SAY TO YOU IN THE WORDS OF EDWARD JOHN CARNELL:

"IF IT IS TRUE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS TO SAVE SINNERS, HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO SAY THAT WE LOVE SINNERS IF WE FAIL TO CONFRONT THEM WITH THIS TRUTH? AND WHERE CAN WE FIND A DIVINELY VALIDATED ACCOUNT OF THIS TRUTH APART FROM SCRIPTURE? IN SUM, WE CAN EXPRESS NO HIGHER LOVE TO LOST HUMANITY THAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PRECISE FORM IN WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO REVEAL IT!"

## C. WORLDWIDE IS THE INVITATION TO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP, CHAPTER 56

### 1. DISTINCTIONS DESTROYED

TEXT: 56:1-5

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.
- 2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that holdeth it fast; that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.
- 3 Neither let the foreigner, that hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak, saying, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah of the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant:
- 5 Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

## QUERIES

- a. Why single out the sabbath as a mark of righteousness?
- b. How could a foreigner join himself to Jehovah?
- c. Why would a eunuch be worried that he was a "dry tree"?

## PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord says, I am soon going to establish My covenant of salvation by grace through the Suffering Servant. It is your responsibility to enter into My covenant by doing justice and righteousness. Blessedness for all men shall be found in keeping My covenant according to My terms. All the former distinctions that hindered foreigners and eunuchs from full covenant relationship will be abrogated when My salvation through the Servant becomes a reality. So the Lord says, Let the foreigners and eunuchs be faithful in keeping My covenant terms out of a heart that chooses to do so, and I will give them a relationship to Me of much more value than any earthly blessing or reputation; I will give them an eternal reputation of blessedness.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-2 COVENANT ESPOUSED: On the basis of the Suffering Servant's atonement and the offer of a new covenant relationship through His accomplishment, the emphasis is now put on man's espousal or choice of that covenant. Jehovah's salvation is "near"! In His salvation, His righteousness will be revealed (cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21-26). Logically, then, those who choose the benefits of His righteousness must accept the responsibility of such a choice which is to *do* righteously. Those who want the results of righteousness must practice righteousness! Practicing righteousness can be *clearly defined*! Doing what God's revealed covenant terms say is right and refraining

from what God's covenant says is evil is practicing righteousness. The apostle John amplifies this principle in his writings (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; I Jn. 2:3-6; 2:24; 3:19-24; 4:6; 5:1-3, etc.). In our text here, Isaiah uses the "sabbath" as an example of man's obligation to keep God's covenant according to God's terms. Next to circumcision, the sabbath was the central sign of the covenant (cf. Ex. 31:13ff; Ezek. 20:12ff). This does not mean the sabbath day was to be a commandment of the New Covenant which the Messiah would establish. *Sabbath* is used in a number of messianic prophecies to exemplify the prediction that members of the future messianic kingdom would be covenant-keepers instead of covenant-breakers like the Jews of the days of the prophets (cf. Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; 46:3). Sabbath-day keeping in the New Covenant dispensation is definitely abrogated as a law of God since the O.T. ordinances were "nailed" to the cross (cf. Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 9:10; 10:1, etc.). Sabbath-keeping is, at best, merely a matter of opinion in the New Dispensation (cf. Rom. 14:1-12; Col. 2:16-23). The use of the sabbath by Isaiah in this messianic text is a clear example of "times-coloring" in prophetic literature. How is a prophet 700 years removed from the messianic age to communicate the idea of sincere covenant-keeping to his audience? He must do it in terminology and practices contemporary with his own dispensation and age. Therefore, he idealizes the concept of covenant-keeping with one's sincerity in keeping the sabbath!

v. 3-5 CONTEMPTIBLE EXALTED: Foreigners (*nakerily*, Heb.) and sojourners (*ger*, Heb.) might become citizens and members of the covenant people but they were prohibited from participating in full fellowship with the people of the land (cf. Ex. 12:43-49; Lev. 16:29; 17:12; 18:26; 22:10; 25:35; 25:40; Num. 15:15; 16:29; 19:10; 35:15, etc.). Eunuchs were also barred from the temple of God (Deut. 23:1). Naturally, when they heard Isaiah's magnificent predictions of the glorious messianic age to come they would assume "second class citizenship" to be their lot in that age also. Taking the case of the eunuchs first the Lord says they shall have an inheritance in the messianic

kingdom in spite of the fact that they could produce no progeny. In the Jewish mind messianic inheritance was tied directly to the land and tribal inheritances. If a man could produce no offspring he had no hope in the messianic future. But there will be no such limitations or hindrances to full favor in the messianic age. If men will keep God's covenant in the new dispensation and *choose* what pleases the Lord, they will be brought into God's house in full fellowship. Outward observance is not sufficient (Mt. 5:17—6:18; Jn. 4:21-24; Mt. 15:1-19), the new covenant will be written on the *heart* (Jer. 31:31-34). In the messianic kingdom there will be no distinctions as to race, physical perfection, economic or educational status (cf. Gal. 3:23-29). All will be full-fledged sons of the covenant, descendants of Abraham according to faith, heirs of the promises of God (Eph. 2:11-22, Rom. 8:12-17, etc.). We have a specific example of the fulfillment of this in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Here is one eunuch indeed who has a name that is far more honored than it could have ever been by a long line of illustrious descendants. The primary reason for restrictions about sojourners and eunuchs in the O.T. was ceremonial uncleanness. But those who shall choose the covenant terms of the Messiah and keep them shall be cleansed of all defilement (ceremonial and moral) (cf. Zech. 12:10—14:21; Mal. 3:1-6; etc.).

### QUIZ

1. What salvation is predicted as "near"?
2. Why the exhortation to keep justice and do righteousness?
3. Is sabbath-keeping a literal requirement for the messianic age?
4. What is "times-coloring"?
5. What status did foreigners and eunuchs have in relationship to the O.T. covenant?
6. How does Isaiah's promise to the eunuchs here fit in with N.T. doctrines?

7. Cite an example of a eunuch in N.T. times being accepted into Christ's covenant.

## 2. DOERS ARE DISCIPLES

TEXT: 56:6-8

- 6 Also the foreigners that join themselves to Jehovah, to minister unto him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be his servants, everyone that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast my covenant;
- 7 even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
- 8 The Lord Jehovah, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own that are gathered.

## QUERIES

- a. How can these "foreigners" be brought to God's holy mountain?
- b. Who are the "others" of verse eight Jehovah will gather to Himself?

## PARAPHRASE

When My new covenant is established by the Servant, many Gentiles will love the Lord and join themselves to Him and serve Him through obedience to the terms of the Servant's covenant. I, the Lord, will bring them to Zion and cause them to partake of all My blessings there; I will also allow them to minister to Me in Zion. Indeed, My new house shall be the



the house of worship for all nations. The same Lord who gathers the believing scattered ones of Israel will gather others from all the Gentile nations to join the gathered of Israel.

## COMMENTS

v. 6 **GODLY**: Already there has been an abundance of predictions from Isaiah that Jehovah will join foreigners (Gentiles) to Zion in the coming messianic age. There are also a number of predictions that these New covenant citizens will become ministers in the New dispensation (cf. Isa. 60:3, 7, 10; Isa. 66:18-23; Zech. 14:16-19, etc.). These ungodly foreigners will "love" the name of Jehovah and keep His covenant ordinances (the new covenant). The foreigners, excluded from the covenant of Israel because of ceremonial and moral uncleanness, will be accepted because they love the name of Jehovah and choose to become His, taking His name as theirs (cf. Isa. 43:1-5). Every member of the new covenant is a priest (minister) (cf. I Pet. 1:5, 9; Heb. 13:15-16).

v. 7-8 **GATHERED**: Jehovah will not necessarily bring foreigners to the literal hill of Moriah where the Jewish temple stood. He will bring them to Zion (Heb. 12:22ff), the N.T. church (cf. Isa. 2:1-4). The following descriptive phrases, "... prayer . . . joyful . . . sacrifices accepted . . .," point to full covenant membership for foreigners. Gentiles will be restored to loving fellowship with the Creator through the Messiah and His new covenant. The Messiah's sacrifice (once for all, cf. Heb. 10:1-18) will atone for all men's sins. God's new house, Zion, will be for men of all nations (Eph. 2:11-22) a house of prayer (cf. Mk. 11:17) because the Messiah will cleanse God's house of those who profane it.

That Jehovah would someday give full covenant membership to Gentiles should not have been such an unlikely thing to the Jews. Verse seven is quoted by Jesus in Mark 11:17. Verse eight is quoted by Jesus in John 10:16. Yet, when Jesus stood and read Isaiah 61:1-2 and applied it to God's mercy extended

to Gentiles, even in O.T. times, they wanted to kill Jesus for it. The following excerpts illustrate the incorrigible obstinacy of the Jewish theologians to accept the predictions of their prophets that Jehovah would accept the Gentiles into full covenant relationship:

#### THE JEWISH VIEW OF GENTILES

(*Everyman's Talmud*, p. 66 & 371)

'Kill the best of the Gentiles! Crush the head of the best of snakes!' (Mech. to xiv, 7; 27a).

'Gentiles are addicted to licentiousness' (Jeb. 98a). The Rabbis were revolted by the low standards of conduct they saw practised around them and were thankful for the finer ideals which their religion offered them. A prayer, composed to be said on leaving the House of Study, reads: 'I give thanks before Thee, O Lord my God and God of my fathers, that Thou has set my lot among those who sit in the House of Study and the Synagogue, and hast not set my lot with those who frequent the theatres and circuses; for while I labour to inherit Paradise, they labour for the pit of destruction' (p. Ber. 7d).

The Holy One, blessed be He, clears Himself with respect to the gentile nations by giving them their reward for the minor precepts which they observed in this world so as to judge and sentence them in the World to Come, that they may have no plea to make and no merit can be found on their behalf' (Tanchuma Kedoshim I).

'R. Eliezer declared, "No Gentiles will have a share in the World to Come; as it is said, 'The wicked shall return to the nether-world, even all the nations that forget God' (Ps. ix, 17); 'the wicked' refers to the evil among Israel." R. Joshua said to him, "If the verse had stated 'The wicked shall return to the nether-world and all the nations,' and had stopped there, I should have agreed with you. Since, however, the text adds, 'that forget God,' behold, there must be righteous men among the nations who will have a

share in the World to Come" ' (Tosifta Sanh. xiii. 2). That the righteous of all peoples will inherit the bliss of the Hereafter is the accepted doctrine of Rabbinic Judaism.

"The daughter of an Israelite may not assist a gentile woman in childbirth, since she would be assisting to bring to birth a child for idolatry." (Mishnah, A.Zar. 2.1)

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

## QUIZ

1. How could Gentiles become "ministers" (priests)?
2. What do the words "prayer, joyful, sacrifices" point to for Gentiles?
3. Where does Jesus quote the verse about "house of prayer"?
4. Where does Jesus quote verse eight?
5. How adamant were Jews that Gentiles should not be allowed standing before God?

## 3. DUMB DOGS DENOUNCED

TEXT: 56:9-12

- 9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.
- 10 His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.
- 11 Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter.

12 Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, a day great beyond measure.

### QUERIES

- a. Who are the “dumb dogs”?
- b. Were the “shepherds” of Israel actually drunkards?

### PARAPHRASE

Come like wild beasts, all you pagan nations, and devour this helpless people of Mine, says Jehovah. The watchmen of this people are blind to unbelief and covenant-breaking which is crippling them. The men who are supposed to be spiritual leaders of My people are like stupified dogs; they should be barking the alarm, but they do not because they have sated themselves with self-indulgence so they lie around lazily sleeping and dreaming. These so-called spiritual leaders are like greedy dogs that never get enough. They are like shepherds who cannot seem to understand that an enemy is about to attack their flock because they are completely engrossed in their own selfish pursuits of making money and they are oblivious to the needs of the flock. Not only are they profligates themselves, but they are busy trying to seduce others into their debauchery. They are advocating deliberate drunkenness in order to blot out any concern or responsibility for the spiritual problems facing Israel.

### COMMENTS

v. 9 DESTRUCTION: This section (v. 9-12) connects to the main topic under consideration—Covenant Relationship. This section focuses on the major reason Isaiah was having such a

difficult time getting the majority of his countrymen to renew their messianic relationship with Jehovah. The spiritual leaders were corrupt. Because the nation of Israel had defaulted on its theocratic uniqueness, by dividing into two warring nations (Israel and Judah) and by assimilating idolatry, God was letting her suffer the due penalty of her error in her own body-politic. She tried to deceive pagan empires with treaties and alliances, pitting one against another. Israel exchanged her covenant relationship with the omnipotent Jehovah for vain and destructive covenants with God-opposing nations. Now those empires are poised to wreak destruction upon her (cf. Jer. 12:9; Ezek. 34:5, 8). The figure of speech under which Isaiah here delineates the nations which were enemies of God's people is "beasts" and is used elsewhere in Scripture for the same identification (cf. our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, pgs. 259-260; see also Revelation 13:1ff where Rome is symbolized as "beasts").

v. 10-12 DRUNKENNESS: The "watchmen" (spiritual leaders such as priests and judges) of Israel were blind. Isaiah refers to spiritual blindness which is a deliberate blindness; a blindness of the heart by choice. The spiritual leaders of Israel refused to acknowledge the dangers that were everywhere apparent to men of faith like Isaiah. Micah, (Micah 1:5) a prophet-contemporary of Isaiah, put his finger on the root cause of the sin of both Israel and Judah when he pointed to the capital cities of both nations as the place where corruption began and was at its worst. When the political and spiritual leadership of a nation is decadent, it does not take long for corruption to filter down into the entire fibre of the whole nation at grass-roots levels. Those who would aspire to positions of such leadership have a responsibility beyond their own personal lives—they have a responsibility to those who look to them for leadership in character as well as function.

Isaiah calls the leaders "dogs"! Dogs are mentioned about 40 times in the scriptures. They were not the friendly, domesticated dogs we know in the Western world today. They were half-wild, with some mixture of jackal or wolf, thin from want

of food and ill-natured, which roamed the streets or sometimes traveled with the nomadic shepherds of Palestine, (cf. Job 30:1, etc.). The apostle Paul uses "dogs" to symbolize the vicious Judaizers who were always trying to attack him and the church (cf. Phil. 3:2ff). Here, however, the "dogs" have lost their alertness and activeness because they have sated themselves on self-indulgence. They are mute! They just cannot get up the energy to bark. They really do not care to bark. No warning will come from these "critters" Every farm-boy has seen an illustration of this in the old hound who has filled himself with food and has gone off to lie down in the shade of a tree, hardly opening an eye when someone approaches—he just doesn't care. The whole picture is one of devotion to self-enjoyment and satisfaction and neglect of duty.

These "dogs" (leaders of the nation) are greedy gluttons. They are never satisfied. They must always have more. They are interested only in their own gain. Nothing will bring the downfall of a nation more rapidly than selfish hedonism in its leadership. When public servants serve only themselves, they set the same moral tone for the whole populace. The leaders of Israel prayed upon the flock (cf. Ezek. 34:1-10). They exploited and abused their constituents until the whole nation was sapped of its economic and moral fibre. Then the nation collapsed without the will to reform its morals, resist its enemies or return to the Lord. These leaders encouraged one another and the whole nation to drunkenness, (cf. Isa. 5:11, 22; 24:9—28:7; 29:9; Isa. 24:20; 51:21; Micah 2:11; etc.) Rather than face the reality of the consequences of their careless indulgence, they advocate an alcoholic stupefaction that will anesthetize their reasoning ability. Thus they will create for themselves a fool's paradise, saying, ". . . tomorrow shall be as this day, great beyond measure . . ."

## QUIZ

1. How does this text connect to the previous discussion of Covenant Relationship?

2. Why does Isaiah use "beasts" to refer to pagan nations?
3. Why is it so dangerous for a nation's leadership to become drunkards?
4. Why is the word "dogs" so appropriate for the leaders of Isaiah's day?
5. Why the encouragement by the leaders for all the people to become drunkards?

### SPECIAL STUDY

#### WHAT IS TO BE DONE CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Compiled by Paul T. Butler

1. Beware of them (be on the lookout for). (Matt. 7:15)
2. Know them (by their fruits, their works and doctrines). (Matt. 7:16)
3. Beware of their leaven-like doctrines. (Matt. 16:5-12) (cf. Gal. 5:9)
4. Follow God's word even when the teachers may be hypocritical or partisan. (Matt. 23:1-3) (cf. Phil. 1:15-18)
5. Let them alone. (Matt. 15:13-14)
6. Even if their doctrines are a result of centuries of national heritage, we must follow divinely revealed truth. (John 4:24)
7. Must not hear the voice of hirelings if we want to remain in the One true fold. (John 10)
8. We must follow only those who keep the word of the apostles. (John 15:20; 17:20)
9. We must follow only those who strive for unity. (John 17:21-23)
10. We must cautiously resist any teaching lest we be found fighting against God. (Acts 5:38-39)
11. We have apostolic precedent for debate with false teachers to defend truth. (Acts 6:8-10; 9:28-29; 10:1-18; 11; 13:6-12)
12. We are not to resist evil opposers to the point of reckless and foolhardy throwing away of our life. (Acts 14:1-7)

13. Their doctrine must be investigated in the light of revelation by the leaders of the church and the true doctrine preached polemically (Acts 15:1—16:5) in churches.
14. When they oppose and blaspheme the truth we should refuse to continue with them. (Acts 18:6) (cf. Matt. 7:6)
15. Separate the disciples from those who speak evil of the Way. (Acts 19:9)
16. Those sincere believers who have not learned and are not teaching the complete revelation need to be taught privately. (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7)
17. Elders are to "take heed"; "feed"; "watch"; "admonish with tears night and day"; "command the flock to God's word" as *preventive polemics*. (Acts 20:28-32)
18. Opinions are not necessarily false teaching until someone makes them laws. (Rom. 14:1—15:7)
19. Mark them—turn away from them in their devisive doctrines. (Rom. 16:17)
20. Those who claim to be prophets or teachers must acknowledge the apostles' letters as divine revelation. (I Cor. 14:37-38)
21. We are not to be "yoked together" with those who teach falsely or live falsely. (II Cor. 6:14-18)
22. Beware of their abilities to fashion themselves into angels of light and ministers of righteousness. (II Cor. 11:13-15)
23. They are to be anathematized. (Gal. 1:6-9) (They anathematize themselves.)
24. Rebuke publicly ("to the face") in some instances. (Gal. 2:13-14)
25. Stand fast in freedom of the gospel (do not be bound by false laws added to it). (Gal. 5:1)
26. If a brother trespass in false teaching we are to seek his restoration in a spirit of gentleness. (Gal. 6:1-5)
27. We are to grow up in faith to prevent being "carried away by false teaching." (Eph. 4:11-16)
28. We are to speak boldly the truth in love—each member of the body fulfilling his part in this speaking of the truth.



- (Eph. 4:15-16)
29. Not to be partakers (associate) with them (Eph. 5:6-11) and to prove all things by bringing God's revelation to shine upon them—we are to expose false teachings.
  30. We are to redeem the time by learning and understanding what the will of the Lord is in order to *prepare* for combating falsehood. (Eph. 5:15-18)
  31. We are to recognize that we wrestle against supernatural power (Eph. 6:10-18)—and we must arm ourselves with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, with prayer—we must be wise as to Satan's devices. (II Cor. 2:11)
  32. We are to pray for knowledge to prove what is excellent. (Phil. 1:9-10)
  33. Mark them and beware of false teachers. (Phil. 3:2, 17-19)
  34. Take heed and beware of philosophies of men. (Col. 2:8)
  35. Let no man judge us in matters of expediency. (Col. 2:16)
  36. Train ourselves to answer false teachers. (Col. 4:6)
  37. Declare the gospel in face of great opposition and beware of those who preach to please men. (I Thess. 2:1-6)
  38. We are not to be ignorant. (I Thess. 4:13)
  39. We are to prove all things—hold fast to the good. (I Thess. 5:21)
  40. We are to strengthen one another with pure doctrine. (I Thess. 4:18)
  41. Withdraw from every brother that does not abide in apostolic doctrines. (II Thess. 3:6)
  42. Have no company with disobedient (II Thess. 3:14)—but admonish like a brother.
  43. Charge false teachers to refrain from their teaching. (I Tim. 1:3-4)
  44. Paul delivered two unto Satan who, through their blasphemy and apostacy, had "shipwrecked the faith." (I Tim. 1:19-20)
  45. Preachers are to expose the hypocrisy and demonical nature of false doctrines. (I Tim. 4:1-6)
  46. Refuse profane doctrines. (I Tim. 4:7)
  47. Evangelists are to train themselves in the Word to withstand

these false doctrines. (I Tim. 4:11-16)

48. We are to shun those who do not agree with sound doctrine and who have a morbid craving for controversy. (I Tim. 6:3-11)
49. We are to "fight the good fight" and withstand false doctrine. (I Tim. 6:12)
50. We are to turn away from false teachings and "guard" the truth. (I Tim. 6:20-21)
51. Charge brethren in the sight of the Lord not to strive about words. (II Tim. 2:14)
52. Shun profane babblings. (II Tim. 2:16-17)
53. Refuse foolish and ignorant questionings. (II Tim. 2:33)
54. Correct in spirit of meekness those that oppose themselves. (II Tim. 2:25)
55. Turn away from false teachers. (II Tim. 3:1-5)
56. We are to imitate the apostles in their dealings with false teachers—to teach, correct, reprove, instruct. (II Tim. 3:10-17)
57. We are to preach constantly, reproving, rebuking, exhorting. (II Tim. 4:1-5)
58. We are to exhort in sound doctrine, convict (show them for what they really are) the gainsayers. (Titus 1:9)
59. The mouths of false teachers *must be stopped*. (Titus 1:11)
60. The false teachers are to be reproved sharply. (Titus 1:13)
61. Shun foolish questionings. (Titus 1:9)
62. A factious man is to be refused after a first and second admonition. (Titus 3:10)
63. We are to exercise our senses to discern good and evil. (Heb. 5:11-14)
64. We are to obey elders as those who watch for our souls. (Heb. 13:17)
65. We are to pray for divine wisdom to guard against demonical wisdom. (James 1:5)
66. We are to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus lest we be carried away. (II Peter 3:17-18)
67. We are to remember that God's word foretells false teachers arising. (II Pet. 3:1-7)

68. We are to take heed to what the apostles have warned about false teachers. (I John 2:18-25)
69. Believe not every spirit but prove (test) each teacher. (I John 4:1-6)
70. Test teachers as to how they listen and heed the apostolic doctrine. (I John 4:5)
71. We are not to fellowship with false teachers (II John 5-11) — we are not to receive them into our home nor give them greeting (those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ).
72. We are to contend (agonize) earnestly for the faith which is once for all time delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3)
73. Remember that false teachers have been prophesied. (Jude 17)
74. We are to build ourselves up in faith, pray in the Spirit, keep ourselves in love (Jude 20, 21) as a method of combating false teaching.
75. On some who are teaching falsely not of perverse nature but out of doubt, we are to convince in an attitude of mercy. (Jude 22, 23)
76. Try those who claim apostolic authority to teach. (Rev. 2:2)

#### D. WEARINESS TO WICKED WHO BREAK COVENANT WITH THE LORD, CHAPTER 57

##### 1. SORCERY

TEXT: 57:1-5

- 1 The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.
- 2 He entereth into peace; they rest in their beds, each one that walketh in his uprightness.
- 3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the harlot.

- 4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and put out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,
- 5 ye that inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every green tree; that slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?

### QUERIES

- a. Who are the “sons of the sorceress”?
- b. Were the Israelites really “slaying” children?

### PARAPHRASE

These insensitive, indulgent leaders of Israel have produced a whole nation of uncaring people. These are times when good men are being destroyed and dying and no one seems to care or wonder why. Most do not realize that when the good man dies he is being taken away from these calamitous times. When the good man dies he enters in to a peaceful rest from the trials of this life. But you followers of sorcery and idolatry, prepare yourselves to face the wrath of Jehovah. Who are you making fun of? Who are you mocking with your impudent face-making? You are the sinners, aren't you? You passionately indulge in the sexual orgies of idol worship in the groves of terebinth trees and let your children be slain as human sacrifices in the rocky valleys of Palestine, do you not?

### COMMENTS

v. 1-2 **THE RIGHTEOUS:** The problem Isaiah addresses here has been a problem for mankind ever since the Fall—why is it that the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer? Of course, it is a problem only because of faulty perspective.

History looked at from the human perspective (limited to the past and the present; limited to this world and this life only) does seem to substantiate the idea that it "does not pay" to be good. But history seen from the divine perspective (by faith in the revelation of God about the past, present and future) says quite the opposite. The righteous man may *perish* ('*avad* in Hebrew which means "destroy") and the world evaluates it as something to be shunned. But the prophet of God says when the righteous man dies it is far from a tragedy for he is taken away from the evil to come. That is, the righteous man is delivered from the trials and tribulations of this world (cf. Rev. 7:14-17; 14:13; Psa. 116:15). Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, writes of the social chaos in the northern Ten Tribes (Israel) (cf. Hosea 4:1ff). No doubt the same kind of injustice and destruction was being directed against the righteous in the southern kingdom (Judah). Micah, also a contemporary of Isaiah, speaks of the ungodliness of Judah (cf. Micah 2:8-11; 3:1-3; 6:6-16; 7:1-6). Micah agrees with Isaiah that "the godly man has perished from the earth . . ." (Micah 7:2). The Hebrew word *yanuhu* is translated *rest* and has the connotation of "repose" (relaxation, ease). It is more precise than the usual Hebrew word for rest which is *shavath* ("sabbath"). Isaiah likens this rest unto sleep in the "bed." The word *shalom* at the first of the verse indicates the utter peacefulness which death brings to the man who "walks" in righteousness (cf. Dan. 12:10-13). Even if the righteous man must walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (cf. Psa. 23). The wicked covenant breakers of Isaiah's day have it all wrong! They are self-deceived. They think the righteous have come to an untimely death because of their stubborn faithfulness to keep God's covenant. But it is the wicked covenant breakers who shall suffer!

v. 3-5 THE RIOTOUS REBROBATES: Thus the prophet arraigns the riotous leaders whom he had just characterized as "dumb dogs" (cf. 56:9-12). These leaders and their followers (which was the majority) are now characterized as "sons of the sorceress."

The Hebrew word used here for *sorceress* is *'onenah* which means literally "one who divines by the clouds." All "divining, soothsaying, magic, astrology" was prohibited by Mosaic law (cf. Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:9-15). In the passage in Deut. 18:9-15 Moses categorizes the pagan practices as:

1. *me'onen* — one who bewitches with the evil eye; a cloud diviner
2. *menahesh* — an enchanter; snake-charmer; mesmerist; hypnotist
3. *mekasheph* — mutterer of incantations; ventriloquial whispers as under the influence of the spirits of the dead
4. *khover* — one who inflicts a spell by weaving magical knots
5. *'ov* — lit. means "bottle" indicating something like one who pretends powers over genii
6. *yidde'oniy* — a wizard; one who interprets the ravings of a medium
7. *doresh 'el-hammethiyim* — a necromancer; one who calls up the spirits of the dead

Moses placed Moloch-worship at the head of his list, probably to show the integral connection between the practice of magic and idolatry. Making their children "pass through the fire" (human sacrifice) was more intimately connected with soothsaying (delving into the future) and magic than any other practice of idolatry. See Isaiah 8:19; 44:25 and Ezekiel 21:21 for more on this. Men have, ever since Eden, been possessed with the desire to penetrate the future and to manipulate its course. History clearly demonstrates that such power is not within the realm of the natural abilities of man. Men therefore have always attempted to gain the help of beings (departed dead, demons, Satan, angels, etc.) supposedly possessing such knowledge and power. But this is strictly forbidden by God and His word. By faith in God and obedience to His word men may know all (past, present and future) that pertains to life and godliness (cf. II Pet. 1:3-4).

The majority of people in Isaiah's day no longer sought the

word of God but had turned to "wizards" (cf. Isa. 8:16ff). This inevitably led to the other abominable practices of paganism and idolatry—adultery, fornication, and human sacrifice. They were an impudent, scornful, profane people (cf. Ezek. 2:1-7; 3:1-11, etc.). They were making malicious sport at someone else's expense—probably the poor and the righteous; they were making impudent gestures with their faces, sticking out their tongues in derision. This showed their real character. They proved their falseness by these actions. They mocked the righteous man who died an untimely death, but they were really profaning themselves!

Isaiah's generation was as sick as our generation. The Hebrew word *hannechamim* means literally, *violently, passionately*, but is translated, *inflame yourselves* in verse five. They indulged in the violent, passionate, sexual orgies among the terebinth ('*elim*) trees. The *terebinth* is related to the pistachio trees. In Palestine it grows sometimes as high as 40 feet and spreads its branches, with their thick, dark-green foliage, over a wide area (cf. II Sam. 18:9ff). The same Hebrew word is sometimes translated *oak* and sometimes *green tree*. It was the tree that provided the "groves" in which the pagans practiced their idolatry and adultery (cf. Deut. 12:2; I Kings 14:23; Jer. 2:20; 3:6, 13; 17:2; Hos. 4:13ff; Ezek. 6:13, etc.). The worst of the idolatrous practices was child sacrifice. This was often carried out in the Valley of Hinnom, within sight of the Temple of God (cf. Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 26:26-31). "In the valleys" suggests the many rocky valleys of Palestine walled on each side by "clefts of the rocks." Archaeologists have uncovered earthen jars containing the bones of sacrificed infants from various cities and villages of ancient Palestine, confirming the statements of the prophets. Ed. J. Young points out that the description "in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks" is certainly "not applicable to Mesopotamia . . ." Another piece of the cumulative evidence that the latter portions of Isaiah were written by the prophet Isaiah who lived in Palestine *before* the Babylonian captivity, and not by some unknown post-exilic "Deutero-Isaiah."

## QUIZ

1. What is the problem with the righteous dying Isaiah deals with in this text?
2. Is it a tragedy when the righteous man dies?
3. How many different kinds of "sorcerers" might have practiced in Palestine?
4. What kind of sorcerer did Isaiah name in verse three?
5. How were Isaiah's people demonstrating their profaneness?
6. How intense was their indulgence in idolatry?
7. What bit of evidence do we have for the authorship of Isaiah here?

## 2. SENSUALITY

TEXT: 57:6-10

- 6 Among the smooth stones of the valley is thy portion; they, they are thy lot; even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered an oblation. Shall I be appeased for these things?
- 7 Upon a high and lofty mountain hast thou set thy bed; thither also wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.
- 8 And behind the doors and the posts hast thou set up thy memorial: for thou hast uncovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.
- 9 And thou wentest to the king with oil, and didst increase thy perfume, and didst send thine ambassadors far off, and didst debase thyself even unto Sheol.
- 10 Thou wast wearied with the length of thy way; yet saidst thou not, It is in vain; thou didst find a quickening of thy strength; therefore thou wast not faint.

## QUERIES

- a. What is the portion called "among the smooth stones"?
- b. Where is "behind the doors and the posts"?



- c. How could they be "wearied" and yet find "quickenings of strength"?

### PARAPHRASE

You stupid people. You go down into the valleys and take the stones worn smooth by the rains and winds and make them your gods. You have declared that these rocks are the focus of all your existence. You worship rocks with wine and grain offerings. Do you think this is acceptable to Me, the Living God? You have not allowed any obstacle to deter you from entering into the gross sexual immoralities connected with your idolatry. You laboriously carry your beds up steep mountains and set them there to aid in your indulgence. Up there you also haul all your offerings and sacrifices. The scripture plaques that are supposed to be where they can be seen on the door-posts of your homes you have deliberately hidden behind the posts. You have done this because you have committed yourselves to total intimacy in idolatry and immorality. You take off your clothes and climb into your large beds up among the groves of the hills along with those prostitutes you have paid to have sexual intercourse with you. This is your consuming passion, Israel! You spared yourself no trouble in developing these abominable practices as your way of life. A long time ago you sent merchants and envoys to pagan kings trading your goods for their gods. You continued to go out of your way to make yourself more and more comfortable to heathen practices. You allowed yourself to be debased with a rottenness like that of the grave in order to practice your immorality. All this made you physically and psychologically weary but you never admitted the stupidity of it all because you found a certain intoxicating, exhilaration in your rebellious immorality. So, you kept it up!

## COMMENTS

v. 6-8 PRESENT: The depravity of the rulers and leaders infected the whole nation. The "smooth stones" of the valley apparently are to be linked to the idolatry being practiced. Perhaps they were using these "smooth stones" to build altars (which in itself was forbidden; not even to Jehovah was an altar to be built anywhere except in Jerusalem) to pagan gods. They might have been using the "smooth stones" to chisel into images of Molech or other idols. The question of Jehovah through His prophet is, almost incredulous, "Do you actually believe this is acceptable to Me, the Living God!?" Worshiping rocks!? The worship of Molech (in Hebrew the word means, "governing"), god of the Ammonites, was best noted for its gross sexual orgies and sacrifice of children. It was already forbidden by Moses (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5); allowed by Solomon to please his foreign wives (I Kings 11:7); principally worshipped in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) (II Chron. 33:6). The words Moloch, Molech, Milcom (I Kings 11:5) and Malcam (Zeph. 1:5) are all variations of the same image. (See *Minor Prophets*, by Clinton Gill, College Press, pgs. 22-38; and Ezek. 16:20; 23:37-39; Jer. 7:9-11, 31; 19:4-13; Psa. 106:35-42; for further information on the worship of Molech.)

Setting up a bed upon a "high and lofty mountain" indicates extensive and elaborate preparations were made by the Hebrews in order to engage in these Canaanite fertility-cult practices. There were special groves of trees, well-kept flower gardens and elaborately furnished "temples" high up in the hills of Jehovah's holy land where the men and women went to "worship" at the throne of flesh. Great amounts of labor and money were spent building and maintaining these whore-houses. The worship of flesh is not dead! Great amounts of labor and money are expended today to build and maintain modern sophisticated whore-houses. The Anglo-saxon fertility cult has its groves, prophets, priestesses, publishing-houses, and "temples" today in both America and Great Britain.

One might wonder how the Hebrew people could ever succumb

to such gross depravity. They had the Law of Moses. They even copied some of those Laws and fastened them to the door-posts of their houses so they might be reminded constantly of Jehovah's presence and His revealed will. Verse eight tells the tragic story! These people had deliberately taken these "memorials" of scripture off their door-posts and hidden them "behind" the posts. Out of sight, out of mind! The Hebrew people had long ago rejected the word of God (II Kings 17:19; II Chron. 36:16; Amos 2:4, etc.). Incredibly, the books of the Law of the Lord had even been lost at one point in Judah's history (cf. II Kings 22:8ff). These people had prostituted themselves to pagan gods. What they were doing was no accident. It was not because they had been socially deprived, or because they were born in a "ghetto." They voluntarily chose to "uncover" themselves to another. This is a figurative description of the intimacy with which they joined themselves to their idols. They really gave themselves to idolatry; they "married" their pagan gods ("made . . . a covenant"). That is not unique. People today "marry" their possessions, their jobs, their recreation. These Jews "loved" their idol-beds (orgies). They were not forced into idolatry.

v. 9-10 PAST: Judah's past history was replete with instances of her kings and leaders going to pagan kings for help in bringing idolatry into the land of Jehovah (cf. II Kings 16:10ff; II Chron. 28:22ff; Isa. 30:1ff; Amos 5:25-27, etc.). Ezekiel's graphic parody of Judah's idolatry (spiritual adultery) pictures the nation, the bride of Jehovah, as an adulterous nymphomaniac! She did not play the part of a normal prostitute accepting pay for her adultery. She went after her lovers, paying them to practice spiritual harlotry with her (Ezek. 16:23-34)! Judah could not invent enough idolatry on her own—she had to send ambassadors to other nations to copy their idolatry for themselves. *Sheol* symbolized the grave, the place where human flesh rots. Graves were associated with that which was "unclean" according to the Mosaic Law. Isaiah declares Judah "debased" herself even unto rottenness, corruption and death by joining herself so intimately and wholly to idolatry.

Judah expended great effort, millions of shekels, and willingly allowed herself to be humiliated before pagan kings in her insatiable lust for idolatry. Judah "wore herself out" running after every opportunity to engage in it. Prophets likened Israel's pursuit of idolatry to a "wild ass" in heat (cf. Jer. 2:23-24; Hosea 8:9ff). Pursuing idolatry as Judah did was expensive, exhausting and debasing, but she never would admit the obvious: "It is vain." As a matter of fact, she found a certain intoxication and exhilaration in it. Sin and rebellion is enticing because it intoxicates with a *false* sense of *power*. Man in rebellion against God falsely assumes an exhilarating sense of sovereignty. His brain, intoxicated with this false sovereignty, is philosophically and psychologically addled and he will not admit the stupidity of his rebellion. He floats in a fantasy-land of philosophical inebriation like the drunkard. He has a false sense of "strength." This was Judah. She would not admit the stupidity of idolatry (cf. Isa. 44:9-20) because she was inebriated with the indulgent pleasure and false sovereignty she felt in practicing it.

## QUIZ

1. What were the people doing with the "smooth stones"?
2. What was involved in the worship of Molech?
3. To what pains did these people go to practice their idolatry?
4. Would the Hebrew people reject the Law of Moses?
5. To what extent did Judah go after idolatry?
6. What is so invigorating about sin and idolatry?

## 3. STUPIDITY

TEXT: 57:11-13

- 11 And of whom hast thou been afraid and in fear, that thou liest, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart?

have not I held my peace even of long time, and thou fearest me not?

12 I will declare thy righteousness; and as for thy works, they shall not profit thee.

13 When thou criest, let them that thou hast gathered deliver thee; but the wind shall take them, a breath shall carry them all away; but he that taketh refuge in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.

### QUERIES

- a. What "righteousness" did Judah have to declare?
- b. When would Judah cry?

### PARAPHRASE

Israel, what has preoccupied you and possessed you? Who has so impressed you that you have so thoroughly devoted yourself to that which is false? Why have you forgotten Me? Apparently you no longer fear Me because I have withheld My hand of judgment so long from you. Let Me tell you that I am soon going to show you, in no uncertain terms, what I think of your alleged righteousness. I am also going to show you that the idols you have made for yourself are not gods at all. Then you will cry out for deliverance but I will say, Let your idol-gods deliver you. They will be proven to be absolutely useless. They will disappear like a feather in a windstorm. In that time of trial, the person who puts his trust in Me will be able to look forward in hope that I will fulfill My promises to the faithful.

## COMMENTS

v. 11 ENTRENCHED: The Hebrew word *da'agethe* is translated *afraid* but more properly means *anxious* or *preoccupied*. The word *thyire'yi* is from the root *yera'* and is translated *fear*; it is the most generic word for *fear* in Hebrew and generally means *reverential fear*. These people were not trembling with a paralyzing terror; they were just totally preoccupied with worshipping their idols and all the false living that went with it. They were living a lie and had totally committed themselves to it. This was a result of their breaking covenant with Jehovah. It was stupidity. And Jehovah was about to expose that stupidity. They were so thoroughly engrossed in their plunge into self-indulgence they did not remember Jehovah. How quickly men forget!

The goodness of God in "holding His peace" and withholding His judgments did not cause them to remember Him in thankfulness. They were not moved by His grace to repent. Their selfish, twisted minds rationalized that they were getting away with their wickedness. Israel had wanted to "be like the nations" for a long time (cf. I Sam. 8:4ff). For centuries she had preoccupied herself with the approval of men. When that consumes a nation or a man, Jehovah is forgotten. You cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God (James 4:4).

v. 12-13 EXPOSED: All the time the Hebrews were engaging in idolatry they were also maintaining a facade of righteousness by offering sacrifices in the temple and by observing certain Sabbath regulations (cf. Amos 8:4-6; Isa. 1:10-15, etc.). But Jehovah will not "hold His peace" forever. He will soon come forth in judgment upon this people and then their sham righteousness will be exposed. The world will see then just where Israel has put its trust. Jehovah will demonstrate that all their pretended righteousness was unacceptable to Him. Not only that, He will expose once and for all the impotency of the idols they worshipped. Their enemies (Assyria and Babylon) will come in succession and attack them, destroy their cities and carry them away into exile. Their enemies will

also carry their idol-gods away on horseback. Their idol-gods will not deliver them from their enemies. Their enemies will mock their idols, their temple, their worship and even Jehovah. Of course, Jehovah will not be mocked. He will eventually destroy their enemies also. When the Hebrews cry out for deliverance, they will see clearly that idols are not gods. What misery and wretchedness is in store for the one who has been so thoroughly preoccupied and possessed by idol-mania. Despair, frustration, shame and guilt will be his end.

To the contrary, the one who has listened to the prophets of God and trusted Jehovah's word will find blessedness. The Hebrew word *khoseh*, translated *refuge*, means *confidence*, *trust*, or *flee to for safety*. The man whose preoccupation is to seek the approval of the Lord will find fulfillment, satisfaction and hope in the ultimate blessings of God. This is the man who keeps covenant with Jehovah.

## QUIZ

1. What kind of fear did the people have?
2. What was false about them?
3. Why had they forgotten Jehovah?
4. What was God going to do about their sham righteousness?
5. What is the character of the man who receives Jehovah's blessing?

## 4. SMITING

TEXT: 57:14-19

- 14 And he will say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way,  
take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.  
15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,  
whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place,  
with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to

revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

- 16 For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit would faint before me, and the souls that I have made.
- 17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid my face and was wroth; and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.
- 18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.
- 19 I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith Jehovah; and I will heal him.

### QUERIES

- a. What is the “stumbling-block” in the way of His people?
- b. Whose spirit would “faint” before Him?
- c. Who is the one “far off” to whom peace is declared?

### PARAPHRASE

And it will be said by the Lord, Build up a roadway, Build up a roadway; make a way that is prepared for My people. Take every obstacle over which they might stumble out of their way. This is the declaration of The High and Lofty One who dwells beyond time and space in eternity and who is Absolute Holiness. This One says, I dwell in the realm of Absolute Holiness beyond time and space, but I also dwell in people who are of a broken, penitent and humble spirit. I am the One who supplies the power to regenerate the broken and humble hearted. I have smitten My people time and again, but I will not smite forever (in fact, I am working toward a peaceful reconciliation with those who will be reconciled), for if I smote them forever and did not provide a way of reconciliation then all mankind



would perish—all the souls I have made. It was on account of My people's greed and defrauding of one another that I smote them. Time after time I withdrew My presence and protection from them but they went right on rebelling and turning away from Me to their own devices. Yes, I have been fully aware of Israel's rebellions, yet, I will accomplish My work of reconciliation and offer Israel healing by My grace. I will offer Myself to Israel for leadership and I will restore blessings to her I promised her long ago. The work of reconciliation and its proclamation will come from Me, says Jehovah, I will accomplish and proclaim peace to everyone in the world who will accept it—to Israel who has been in special covenant relationship to Me and to all the Gentiles who have not. This reconciliation will heal all who accept it of the sickness of their rebellion.

### COMMENTS

v. 14-15 RELIEVED: Although the Lord has recounted the sorceries, sensualities and stupidities of Israel and although He has smitten them in the past (and will smite them again in the captivities), He *now* addresses Himself to the future reconciliation He is going to accomplish through the Servant which will begin in the restoration from the captivity and be offered to all mankind through covenant relationship. Jehovah will command, "Build a roadway, build a roadway . . ." The Hebrew words *sollu sollu* are from the root word *salal* which means "heap up" as in building up a road-bed. In rescuing His people from captivity (the first and imperative step toward messianic fulfillment) Jehovah commands their captors not merely "let my people go," but "Put your hand to the task, O captors of My people, and assist them by working for their return to their land!" And thus it was so! Cyrus and the Persians contributed financially and in other ways to return the Jews to Palestine (cf. Ezra, chapters 1-6). The Persians also removed a number of "stumbling-blocks" (Hebrew *mikeshol*, "obstacle")

from the way of the Jews.

It is the omnipotent Jehovah, the high and lofty One who has decreed this redemption of those He will soon smite in captivity. Jehovah is God without beginning and end. He dwells in absolute unendingness ("eternity"). He sees all things at once. There is no time with Him. Thus He is able to talk about Israel's captivity and redemption all at the same time. The same *perspective* is available to human beings through *faith* in Jehovah. This is hope in the midst of trouble. Jehovah is about to make "the Valley of Achor (Trouble) a door of hope" (cf. Hosea 2:15; II Cor. 1:3-11). Jehovah is also absolutely holy (righteous, pure, true, just, faithful). He keeps His word. What He is and says is always good. And, although He dwells in the high and holy place, He also dwells with men who are of a contrite and humble spirit—for that is good. The Hebrew word *daka'* means literally, *bruise, break in pieces, crush, contrite*. Men who wish to be filled with the goodness God can supply must first of all be poor in spirit (cf. Mt. 5:3-9; Psalms 34:18; 51:17; Isaiah 66:2). The Hebrew word *shephal* means, *made low, depressed, thrown down, sit down low, humbled*. The Lord could not dwell with the nation as it was during the days of the prophets for it was haughty (Isaiah 2:11, 17; 3:16; 10:33; 24:4; Ezekiel 16:50; Zephaniah 3:11; Micah 2:3). He exhorted them to be humble (Micah 6:8). The Lord cannot dwell in a church that is haughty either (Revelation 3:17, etc.). How is it that the Lord requires humility and contrition in order to dwell in the human heart on the one hand and then on the other hand promise to "revive the spirit of the humble"? In this case, of course, the Lord is not going to "revive" haughtiness. He is going to regenerate. What a man boasts in determines his state of aliveness. If he boasts in himself, he is dead because human power is impotent. If he boasts and trusts in the Lord he is humbled but he has hope because he shall receive an imputed exaltation—an imputed righteousness and eternal life. And, of course, the only way an *imputed* exaltation can be received is by faith in the One who is alone able to impute it—God! That is why David was a "man after God's own

heart." In his contrition and humility David cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me . . ." (Psa. 51:10).

Jehovah is going to smite His people in captivity in order to make it possible for those who will to be contrite and humble. Then He is going to redeem them and revive them and form a faithful remnant from among them through which to bring to fruition His ultimate redemptive work in the Suffering Servant.

v. 16-19 REASON: The reason for the smiting and the reviving is now proposed. If He should contend *forever* there would be *no* redemption for anyone! All have sinned. All deserve eternal punishment. But, amazing grace, God has a divine plan by which He will offer salvation to those who will accept it. He will punish sin in His Son, thereby justifying His holiness and at the same time justifying those who believe (cf. Rom. 3:21-26)! Man's salvation originates absolutely in the *grace* of God! Had it not, all "spirits would faint" before Him and all the "souls that He made" would perish.

Certainly, for the iniquity of man's covetousness God was, by His very nature, moved with wrath and condemnation. The question is not, "How could a good God send anyone to Hell? . . ." the question is, "How could a good God send a sinner to Heaven?" He could not. Therefore, He worked out a way to make sinners good enough to go to Heaven. The Hebrew word *batsa'* is translated "covetousness" and means *unjust gain, to spoil, to plunder, to defraud*. It was this deliberate, often violent defrauding of one's fellow man that moved Jehovah through the centuries to smite Israel. Still she kept on "turning away from" Him (Heb. *shovav*) or "backsliding." To turn away from God is to go backwards. Many men have thought that turning away from God and the Bible was to advance. But history has proved over and over that turning away from God and the Bible is regression for humanity.

Now the purpose of God's smiting is to "heal." This healing is a spiritual healing—a healing of the inner man (cf. Isa. 19:22; 53:5; Hosea 5:13; 6:1; 14:4; Jer. 17:14; 30:17, etc.).

God, the divine surgeon, had to use drastic, radical "surgery" to heal Israel, for she resisted it adamantly (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 15:18, etc.). The healing process began with the smiting at the captivity, continued through the rescue from captivity and the "indignation" of the post-exilic centuries, and was finally accomplished in the Servant through whose "stripes we are healed," (Isa. 53:5ff). And that is precisely, we believe, the relationship of verse 19 to this context, inasmuch as it appears to be fulfilled in Acts 10:36 and Ephesians 2:17. God's healing was reconciliation of Himself to man (Isa. 53:1ff). Reconciliation (healing) in the plan of the God of all mankind was ultimately to be provided for all men. Thus, when peace (reconciliation) was declared to those near and to those afar, it was done in the completed work of the Messiah. Again, the missionary call rings forth from the "Gospel prophet of the O.T."

### QUIZ

1. What does the term "Cast ye up . . ." imply about the Hebrew return from captivity?
2. Why stress the nature of God here?
3. Why emphasize that God dwells in the contrite and humble hearted?
4. How does God "revive" the humble hearted?
5. Why did God have to "smite" Israel to heal?
6. Who all are to be recipients of God's healing?
7. Where is the fulfillment of verse 19?

### 5. SEETHING

TEXT: 57:20-21

- 20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest,  
and its waters cast up mire and dirt.
- 21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

## QUERIES

- a. Why are the wicked like the sea?
- b. Is there really no peace to wicked people?

## PARAPHRASE

But the wicked are never healed in the inner man because they are filled with a restlessness of soul that keeps boiling up within them like the sea whose waves never stop rolling in, bringing up filth and muck. There is no secure feeling of being at peace with the wicked.

## COMMENTS

v. 20 CONSCIENCE: The contrite and humble man will be healed. He will be healed in the inner man where the conscience dwells. He will receive, by grace, through faith, an imputed righteousness—a cleansed conscience. But the wicked man's conscience is like the constantly rolling sea. It is *never* completely at rest. It may be calmed at times, but it is forever boiling and churning and more often than not it is casting up all the mire and muck thrown into it. The wicked, said Calvin, “. . . are terrified and alarmed by conscience, which is the most agonizing of all torments and the most cruel of all executioners.” Luther said, “Conscience is a savage beast and a devil . . . There is nothing which so much disturbs the peace or causes so much unrest as a frightened heart. It turns pale at the flash of lightning and at the rattle of a leaf.” From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch of September 22, 1941 comes the following story:

Seven years of tortured nights, when he awakened screaming at the specter of the man who had befriended him and whom he had killed, have ended for Harold Malmberg.

Malmberg, 27 years old, died yesterday in the Nebraska Penitentiary hospital from poison he swallowed three days before, Warden Neil Olson said. During his seven years, Malmberg "was a model prisoner," who never complained and did not seek parole, Olson added. But he could not face his conscience.

Malmberg had few nights of peace after he shot Russell Goodwin three times in 1934 and left him beside the road to die, after Goodwin, a traveling salesman, had picked up the hitchhiking youth. In prison he had nightmares in which the man he admitted murdering "came back every night to sit on his bed and talk to him," the warden explained.

In the daytime, Malmberg was "a jovial sort who did the tasks required of him cheerfully and well."

While he steadfastly refused to tell what he had swallowed, doctors labored continuously over Malmberg from the time he was discovered ill early Friday morning until he died. The poison apparently had been stolen from the prison photographic darkroom where he worked.

Malmberg consistently denied he intended to kill Goodwin when he ordered the salesman out of his car at pistol point. The jury did not accept his pleas of insanity, and the Des Moines, Iowa, youth was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Man may escape the punishment of human courts and judges. His evil deeds may be kept in absolute secrecy from everyone else. He may carry them with him to the grave, but he cannot hide himself from his conscience, nor can he escape from its tormenting judgment. Every man must live with his own conscience, and woe to him whose conscience has become his judge and executioner. Be assured of this, "If our hearts (conscience) condemn us, God is greater than our heart" (I Jn. 3:20-21).

v. 21 CONFLICT: A guilty conscience may become a frightful tormentor and a source of intense agony and distress leading

to mortal sorrow and, sometimes, even suicide if the sense of guilt cannot be removed effectively. A guilty conscience may even prove disastrous to the physical and mental health of an individual. The wicked, unfaithful, covenant-breaker can never have security, peace of mind and soul.

The point of these last two verses is to make a sharp contrast between the "healing" that will come to those of contrite and humble hearts and their turning to the Lord and His promises to be eventually accomplished in the Servant, and the wicked who refuse healing and reconciliation. The guilty conscience can only be healed through imputed righteousness. The cleansing of the conscience can only come by grace through faith in the substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. I Jn. 1:8-9; 2:1-6; Heb. 9:14; 10:19-22; I Pet. 3:21). One of the important reasons there are certain actions required of men for entrance into covenant relationship with Christ (faith, repentance, immersion in water) is to provide man a series of overt actions and a point of reference in time to which he may relate his inner, invisible spiritual person with the cleansing of his conscience. In other words, man needs such reference points by which to express his faith and experience access into the grace of God (cf. Rom. 5:1-2). It is in our obedience to the word of God that we have assurance of the purification of our souls (cf. I Pet. 1:22-23).

### QUIZ

1. How is the contrite and humble man healed?
2. Have you experienced the truth of verses 20-21 in your conscience?
3. Have you experienced the cleansing of your conscience?
4. How are we assured, what is the source of our assurance, that we may have our conscience cleansed?

## E. WHOLENESS TO THE WISE WHO KEEP CONVENANT WITH THE LORD, CHAPTER 58

### 1. HEARKEN

TEXT: 58:1-5

- 1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.
- 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways: as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near unto God.
- 3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure, and exact all your labors.
- 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high.
- 5 Is such the fast that I have chosen? the day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to Jehovah?

### QUERIES

- a. Why is the prophet not to “spare” in his crying?
- b. How could they “smite” on a fast day?

### PARAPHRASE

Shout this message to the whole nation. Do not relent when they try to justify themselves. Shout clearly to the nation this



warning so the wise will acknowledge their sin and hypocrisy. Most of the people go right on tramping into the courts of the Temple daily as if they really were sincere in knowing My will. They pretend they are concerned about righteousness and obeying My commandments. On the one hand they say they want Me to give them holy guidelines for living because they enjoy doing them. And on the other hand they say, Why should we afflict our souls in fasting and obedience since it appears Jehovah is not taking notice of our righteousness and rewarding us?

Hearken to what I have to say, says the Lord: I know exactly why you fast! The truth is that you are not really afflicting your souls in penitence when you fast. You use your fasts to indulge yourselves in carnal pleasures and to defraud the poor and powerless. You do not prepare your mind and heart to worship God when you fast. Your indulgence and oppression cause you to bicker and fight one another when you are pretending to fast! Do you actually think this is the kind of fasting I have commanded? Is this what you think I call "afflicting one's soul"? Do you think by such an outward show of extreme humiliation (bowing yourself double like a reed and lying down on a bed of sackcloth and ashes) that you can hide your hypocrisy? Is this what you call fasting? Do you believe I will accept your hypocrisy?

## COMMENTS

v. 1-3a HAUGHTINESS: Isaiah is told to cry a "throaty" call. The Hebrew words *kerā' vegaron* mean literally, *call with the throat*. The *Jerusalem Bible* translates, "Shout for all you are worth." Apparently the Lord knew there would be a few in Judah who would hearken to the prophet's call and wisely repent. There were some who would become covenant-keepers. Presently, however, the majority of people were covenant-breakers. Not only so, they were hypocrites as well. The Hebrew word *thakhesek*, translated *spare not*, means *do not withhold*.

The point is that Isaiah is not to hold back declaring the hypocrisy of the majority even when they may appear to be righteous by their great show of religiosity or their attempts to justify themselves (as in verse three) or by their threats against the prophet himself. Isaiah is to become a *shophar* (ram's horn or trumpet, the instrument used to sound a warning).

For the most part, the nation went right on, day after day, haughtily tramping into the courts of the Temple (cf. Isa. 1:12ff), pretending to seek Jehovah and pretending to find satisfaction in obeying His appointed fast days. Publicly they have a finely practiced facade of not being caught disobeying the rituals and ordinances of the Law. They have put on an ostentatious show. Then they reasoned that Jehovah should reciprocate with goodness toward them (material goodness, no doubt) and judgments upon their enemies. It appears they think they have fooled God with their outward show and now expect Him to reward them accordingly. They took pleasure in their religiosity because they had deceived themselves into thinking Jehovah's righteousness could be compromised by their hypocrisy. They believed they could have their sin and Jehovah's blessing at the same time. But obviously, Jehovah had not responded to their sham-fasting as they had expected. He had not healed the social depravity of the day; He had not removed the growing threat of Assyrian or Babylonian invasion of their country. They had so thoroughly calloused their own consciences they blamed Jehovah for what was very evidently about to befall them. They accuse God of insensitivity, of carelessness and unconcern. Usually, the hypocrite plays his part so well, he fools himself more than anyone else. These haughty hypocrites had so deceived themselves they were incredulous that God should not be impressed with their self-righteousness!

v. 3b-5 **HYPOCRISY:** Now Jehovah exposes the hypocrisy of their religiosity. Jehovah makes it plain that He does indeed know what they are doing! They are not fasting to afflict their souls. While they pretend to fast, they are really indulging in their favorite occupation—making money. The Hebrew words

*'atzeyyekem negoshu* are from root words that literally mean, *grieve* and *oppress* respectively, but translated *labors* and *exact* respectively. Obviously, these people were not gathering at fasts to grieve and oppress their own souls so they must have been plotting business deals that would grieve and oppress one another or the poor.

A word about fasting may be in order here. The Hebrew word used for *fast* in the Pentateuch is *'innah* and means literally *to afflict* (the soul) (cf. Lev. 16:29). The Hebrew word most often used after the Pentateuch (and not used in the Pentateuch) is *tzum* meaning literally *to abstain*. Both words are used in verse three. Actually, fasting was commanded in the Law of Moses only once (Lev. 16:29) and that on the Day of Atonement. Apparently, the Hebrew people amplified this command and extended it to most any time of sorrow or need for repentance. The nation and individuals were capable of fasting with proper motives (cf. I Sam. 7:6; II Sam. 1:12; Judg. 20:26; I Kings 21:12-29; Psalms 109:24; Jer. 36:9; Esther 4:1-3; 4:16; Neh. 1:4). The Jewish people who came back from the captivities had doubts about the efficacy of so many fasts and inquired of the prophets and priests whether they should keep them all or not (cf. Zech. 7:1-6; 8:13). In Isaiah's day these fasts were being exploited for mercenary purposes.

The fasts, rather than providing an opportunity for men to abstain from worldly pursuits, afflict their souls and concentrate on God's holiness, provided opportunities for them to haggle, strive, contend, argue and even physically strike one another over profiteering. Leupold visualizes these verses: "The prophet follows them to their place of assembly on a fast day. There, off in a corner, two men are not evaluating their own conduct and that of their nation; they are not seeking the face of God in true repentance. They are carrying on a business transaction. Or . . . while they are publicly engaged in holy exercises, at home the laborer who is working for them is slaving under heavy burdens and is being oppressed."

Rhetorically the Lord asks, Do you think this is the kind of fast I would approve? Their humility was mockery. The

long, tender rush was easily bent double without breaking and furnished a graphic figure for the bent-over false humility of these hypocrites. Jesus described the false humility of the fasting hypocrites of His day as *skuthropos* (Greek for *sad, dejected, sullen, morose*). Jesus said the hypocrites of His day made their normal faces to disappear (*aphanizousin*, Gr.) so they might put on faces (*hopos phanosin*) of fasting, (Mt. 6:16-18). These men of Isaiah's day were extreme in their pretensions even to spreading under themselves a "bed" of sackcloth and ashes. But none of it fooled God! Let every man who reads this be forever impressed with this—God is not mocked! Religious ritual (no matter how scriptural and orthodox and correct) if it is coerced, "psyched," or played-at, if the heart is not right, is an abomination to God! We cannot put on a sad face and fool God; we cannot put on a happy face and fool God; we cannot put on *any* face and fool God!

## QUIZ

1. How emphatic is Isaiah to be in crying his message to the nation?
2. What made these people continue to haughtily pretend to worship Jehovah?
3. What made them criticize God for not being aware of their religiosity?
4. What was fasting originally instituted for?
5. How were these people profaning the matter of fasting?
6. What should we all learn about pretending from this passage?

## 2. HOLINESS

TEXT: 58:6-12

- 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the

oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

- 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?
- 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rearward.
- 9 Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and he will say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly;
- 10 and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity be as the noon-day;
- 11 and Jehovah will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.
- 12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

### QUERIES

- a. Why exhort them not to "hide" from their own flesh?
- b. What is "putting forth of the finger"?
- c. How would they "raise up foundations of many generations"?

### PARAPHRASE

To the contrary, I do have standards for the kind of fasting that is acceptable to Me. If you will afflict your souls and truly

repent, you will cease to oppress your fellow man and make every effort to free the oppressed from any unfair exploitation they may be under. If you will feed those who are hungry, give shelter to the outcast and the needy stranger, clothe those in need of something to wear and remember to minister to the needs of your own family, then you will be repenting as I wish you to do. When you do these things, the glory of God's goodness will burst on your nation like the suddenness and brilliance of the morning sun. Your land will be cured of its chaos and wickedness rapidly. The glory of the Lord will completely surround you, protecting and sustaining you as in the days of old. Then you will be able to call upon the Lord and He will be able to answer. No longer will you be rebelling against Him and running from Him, but you will find Him and He will come to you.

Let Me repeat for emphasis, If you put an end to all the oppression, stop making contemptuous gestures and slanderous words toward people—and if you turn in sympathy to the hungry and feed them and help all who are in need, then the darkness around you now will turn to goodness and truth as bright as the noon-day sun. The Lord will guide such a people every day and will bring life and health to them. Such a people will blossom with righteousness and produce the fruit of justice and give life to all about them like an ever flowing spring in an oasis. If you people will do this you will produce offspring that will build back the messianic nation that was once founded and is now in ruins. What you build, as a result of such repentance, will lay a foundation upon which many generations of the future may be able to build the messianic kingdom. You will be known as the people who repaired the ruined walls of God's redemptive "city" and as the people who restored the way that leads to man's salvation.

### COMMENTS

v. 6-9a REPENTANCE: God promises wholeness to those who will keep His covenant. But Judah needs to repent before

it can meet God's standards of holiness. That is, the nation must change its direction theologically (repenting of idolatry) and morally (repenting of social transgressions). This has to be done individually, of course. If Judah will keep her covenant with the Lord as He wishes her to she will "loose the bonds of wickedness, unto the . . . yoke . . .," feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc. The word "fast" in verse six may be used generically to mean the total relationship of man toward God which would be covenant relationship. Micah's prophecy gives an excellent parallel to Isaiah; they were, after all, contemporaries. Micah, chapters 1-3, document the atrocious sins of the powerful against the weak; chapters 4-5 promise the messianic destiny of the Jews; chapters 6-7 announce to the people of Micah's day what they must do to cooperate with Jehovah in that destiny. The essence of covenant-keeping, according to Micah, is not spectacular religious ritual or sacrifice but simply being Godlike in the everyday, mundane relationships with both God and man. Micah puts it this way, "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

It should not be strange to the people of Judah that one of their prophets would exhort them to care for the poor. The Law of Moses was very clear on caring for the poor (cf. Deut. 14:28—15:18). The Law of Moses was also explicit as to responsibilities toward one's own flesh and blood (family relationships). In such areas as training and discipline of children, levirate law of provision for in-laws, divorce, inheritance laws, etc., the Law is plain. It seems almost incredible that people should have to be reminded to take care of their families, yet even in the New covenant scriptures Christians are admonished, "if any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8). The Pharisees, rather than "honoring" their fathers and mothers by financial support in their old age, declared their assets "Corban" (devoted to God and unavailable for "social security" support). And the Pharisees

were *very* religious people who were certain that they, above every one else, were covenant people of Jehovah!

If the people will repent (change) and turn back to the instructions of God in the Law of Moses, God promises three distinct changes will take place in their society: (a) "Healing" of the wounds and sicknesses of society will take place suddenly and brilliantly like the morning sun. In the land of Palestine, the sun seems to come up instantaneously, not gradually, as in lands with an abundance of trees and other things to block the horizon. (b) The righteousness they practice will be a source of safety and security for life and at the same time Jehovah will give His glorious providential safety and security. Judah will be *surrounded* by a security of righteousness. (c) Repentance will also bring renewed access to God. Jehovah cannot countenance a kingdom in rebellion. Man is created with a free will and the freedom to choose his spiritual Sovereign. If man wishes God to be his Sovereign, man must conform to the Sovereign's rule. As long as man rebels against the sovereignty of God, he cannot (because he does not want) have access to God. Jehovah will answer all who surrender to His sovereignty and call upon Him.

v. 9b-12 RESULTS: There are grander and more gratifying results to add to the nation if it repents. The qualification is restated, but still the same: repentance. Evidently the "putting forth of the finger" was a kind of derisive, contemptuous pointing of the finger (cf. Prov. 6:13). It is listed here in connection with "speaking wickedly" and must have reference to slander or unjust accusations. God says men must repent of that. It is graphic evidence of a hateful heart—one that would despise the hungry and have no compassion on the afflicted.

But look at the promised results of repentance: (a) continual guidance of Jehovah who is absolute truth, absolute justice, absolute righteousness. To the individual who repents will come a personal satisfaction of the soul like the desert nomad's thirst is satisfied when he finds a cool, shady, bubbling spring of water. There will come personal wholeness and spiritual



integration like a man feels physically when he is young and strong and in the prime of health. (b) The man who repents and keeps God's covenant will also produce something for the benefit of others. He will become like a "watered garden" and a "spring of water, whose waters fail not." Jesus said His disciples would become "rivers of living water" (cf. Jn. 7:37-39). The disciples of Jesus are to become salt of the earth and light of the world (cf. Mt. 5:13-16). (c) The man who repents will build the kingdom of God. Obviously, the rebuilding work of those who repent here is the rebuilding of the people's covenant relationship to Jehovah in order that they may fulfill their messianic destiny and form the kingdom of God on earth (the church). Repairing literal walls and building literal foundations can in no way be the goal of this prophecy. Its only goal is to encourage the people of Isaiah's day to be instruments of Jehovah as He reaches toward the establishment of New Israel. And the church was founded on a generation of covenant-keeping Hebrews in the first century A.D. when the gospel was obeyed first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria and then in the uttermost parts of the earth.

### QUIZ

1. What is the word "fast" used for generically in verse six?
2. What does the Law of Moses have to say about treatment of the poor?
3. What does God promise to do for the nation and the individual who repents?
4. How does covenant-keeping enter into this section?
5. What may the individual enjoy personally as a result of his repentance?
6. What may the individual produce for the benefit of others by repentance?

## 3. HERITAGE

TEXT: 58:13-14

- 13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, and the holy of Jehovah honorable; and shalt honor it, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:
- 14 then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

## QUERIES

- a. Why is the sabbath so important?
- b. How will they "ride" upon the high places?

## PARAPHRASE

You people must stop kicking around My sabbath day and wiping your feet on it as something that can be desecrated by exploiting it for your own greedy gain. You must cherish My sabbath as that which is exquisitely precious, that which you delight in and honor. You must honor My sabbath by ceasing to take the day to concentrate on your own indulgence and talking of everything but Me. If you will take this attitude toward My sabbath and cherish Me, then I will exalt you and make you conquerors. I will give you the spiritual birthright which I promised to your ancestor Jacob. That will sustain you for all eternity. These are the words of Jehovah the omnipotent God!

## COMMENTS

v. 13 DEVOTION: The Hebrew word *oneg* (v. 13) or *te 'annag* (v. 14) is translated *delight* but means literally, *delicate, exquisite, luxurious*. The Lord is insisting that His people *cherish* His sabbath. They are presently trampling it under foot, so to speak, as of no more value than something to wipe their feet on. It is being used as a day for planning self-indulgence. They are gathering on God's holy day, a day set aside to think and talk of Him, to talk of making money and plan ways to circumvent His Law (Amos 8:5).

Why is the Sabbath so significant? It was the one condition or requirement that could provide a covenant-keeping relationship that would bring the Hebrew closer to Jehovah than any other. The Sabbath was instituted and set aside as holy unto the Lord long before the Mosaic law. It was consecrated from the beginning of creation. It was given as a type and symbol of the cessation from labor (or rest) into which one enters when entering into covenant relationship provided by Christ. In other words, the old sabbath was an experience symbolic of the Christian experience. The sabbath rest "remaining" in Hebrew 4:9-10 was "being entered" by the "ones believing" (Gr. *oi pisteusantes*, present tense) of Hebrews 4:3. In other words, the one who believes Christ and becomes a Christian does (present tense) enter the *rest* God symbolized by the old sabbath day (cf. also Mt. 11:28-30). Of course, the Christian's present *rest* will some day be finally and ultimately consummated in the new heaven and new earth when he will cease from his labors (cf. Rev. 14:13, etc.). That is why proper relationship to God for those of Isaiah's day be expressed by proper attitude toward God's sabbath day! It had to do with all that God was going to do in salvation and redemption in the Messiah and His kingdom.

v. 14 DOMINION: Proper attitude and action toward God's revealed will (in this case the Sabbath law) logically results in proper attitude and action toward the personhood of God. If a man cherishes God's laws (Psa. 119:1ff), he will cherish

God. Actually the relationship is cyclical. We must first cherish God in order to cherish His law. But the more we cherish His law, the more we will cherish Him! The more we luxuriate in God and His will, the "higher" we will "ride"! The phrase, "... make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth . . ." symbolizes victory, conquest, dominion. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed (cf. Lk. 17:5-6) we can do mighty, victorious, conquering things. The mustard seed means qualitative, not quantitative. It is not a *small* or *big* faith that counts but a *living, producing, working* faith (like a seed has life and production in it). To that kind of faith God will fulfill His promises of victory. It may not be the kind of victory measured by worldly standards; it may not be *physical* victory or dominion in this life. Physical victory in this life was what the majority of the Jews anticipated from the glorious promises of their prophets (e.g., Isa. ch. 60-66). But God intended to give those who were faithful victory and dominion over sin and death through the Messiah. The "heritage of Jacob" was, of course, the birthright. The birthright was a physical thing that had to do with perpetuation of the Hebrew family's inheritance of land and goods through the eldest son. But it had as its ultimate goal the preservation of a people whose destiny was messianic! The birthright was really a spiritual thing. It was to result in the redemption of the whole human race through a human family from a particular human nation.

The promises of verse 14 may find a temporary fulfillment in the return of the Jews from the captivities, but like all other promises concerning the Jewish people and their land and their nation, the ultimate fulfillment was in the "seed" (singular) (cf. Gal. 3:16ff), the Christ and the New Israel (Gal. 6:16). The redemption of man will be consummated when God restores man to the dominion man was given at creation which Christ earned for man (cf. Heb. 2:5-18).

## QUIZ

1. What attitude does God want the people to take toward His sabbath?
2. Why?
3. What does one's attitude toward the law of God have to do with one's attitude toward God?
4. How will God give man dominion?
5. What is the "heritage" of Jacob?

F. WRATH OF THE LORD UPON COVENANT  
DESPISERS, CHAPTER 59

## 1. THEIR CRIMES

TEXT: 59:1-8

- 1 Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:
- 2 but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear.
- 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue muttereth wickedness.
- 4 None sueth in righteousness, and none pleadeth in truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.
- 5 They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth; and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.
- 6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.
- 7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation

and destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they know not; and there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace.

### QUERIES

- a. Why bring up the subject of the people's salvation here?
- b. With what "webs" did the people hope to "cover themselves"?
- c. Why do they not know the "way of peace"?

### PARAPHRASE

Look! The reason My great redemptive plan has to be delayed by a period of chastening for you is not because My power or My willingness is insufficient. You are the reason, O Israel. You are in rebellion against all I want to do for you and through you. Your rebellion and sin has built a wall of unwillingness and rejection. As long as you are determined to continue in your wickedness, you will not see Me as I am. Yes, it is because you have your hands in every conceivable practice of wickedness there is (murder, thievery, covenant-breaking, slander) that you cannot receive My purpose for you. No one practices justice in legal suits or tries cases honestly. People are building this society on moral impotence and falsehood. They spend most of their time plotting wickedness and their plots produce violence. Poisonous seed is produced by these snakes like the eggs of a viper. They build traps for one another like a spider weaving webs. They produce poisonous offspring and everyone who partakes of their wickedness is poisoned also. They think that their subtle "webs" will provide a covering or escape, but the evil of their hearts is clearly seen in what their lives produce. They do not merely stumble into sin, they eagerly race one another to kill and maim the innocent.

They dream and think and plan wickedness all day and all night. They haven't the slightest desire for real peace in this society. They prefer to live crooked and devious lives and when anyone prefers that he is an enemy of justice and peace.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-4 **BARRICADED:** In chapter 58 Jehovah tells the people the virtues which would prepare them to be covenant-keepers and to carry out His messianic plans. But these people are so thoroughly entrenched in sin and rebellion against God's program of righteousness and holiness they must be repeatedly warned of the wrath that comes to those who despise His covenant. These first verses of chapter 59 are a graphic description of Judah's adamant hostility against God's way and her passionate wantonness for wickedness. Isaiah is describing here the conditions during the reign of the most wicked king Judah ever had—Manasseh. Manasseh came to the throne in 687 B.C. as a boy of 12 and was seduced by a powerful group of priests, noblemen and false prophets to reintroduce the idolatry of his ancestors (Ahaz, et al). Judah's prophets (Isaiah and Micah) predicted the wrath of Jehovah which had earlier fallen (722 B.C.) upon Israel. Manasseh outstripped all his ancestors in wickedness, (cf. II Kings 21:1-17; 23:11-14; II Chron. 33:1-20). He instituted a reign of terror and persecution against Jehovah's true prophets unequaled in the history of all Israel (cf. *O.T. History*, Smith and Fields, College Press, pg. 647-650). Isaiah was probably executed during that persecution.

Judah and Jerusalem had been saved from her enemies when Hezekiah paid heed to Isaiah's message from the Lord (cf. chapters 36-39). But now she has, through the leadership of the vilest king she has ever had, committed herself to a path of rebellion which will lead inexorably to captivity. Undoubtedly, there were plain indications to the nation that it was in danger of foreign invasion and captivity. Manasseh was taken captive

and imprisoned by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, in 673 B.C. It appeared that the whole nation would soon suffer the same fate. Whether the people were asking for Isaiah's advice or not, he was giving it. He states unequivocally that they had barricaded themselves from God and He could not help them. The Lord has the power to save them from their enemies if they will turn to Him and trust Him. But as long as they choose paganism, depend upon themselves and heathen allies, He cannot and will not help them. God made man and gave man the sovereignty of his own will. He gave man the awesome freedom to make his own sovereign choices with the attendant responsibility of the consequences of those choices. When man chooses to rebel against the revealed will of God, man willingly separates himself from God's redeeming, saving power. Of course, man is never able to separate himself from God's judgmental power. Men perish because they *refuse* to love the truth (II Thess. 2:9-12). Men scoff and follow their own passions because they deliberately ignore God's truths (cf. II Pet. 3:1-7). Men will not come to the light because they love darkness (Jn. 3:19-21). Men do not come to God because they do not want to be shepherded by Him (Jn. 10:1-39). Men do not come to God because He tells them the truth and they had rather listen to the devil (Jn. 8:39-47). When men build such walls of their own between themselves and God. His only alternative (in the light of man's freedom to exercise his own sovereign will) is to give man up to a base mind and improper conduct (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). When God is forced to give rebelling man up, man must save himself and man cannot do that! Man cannot save himself from nature, from death, from men more powerful than he, and last, but most important, man cannot save himself from his own conscience!

The prophets of God (Isaiah and his contemporaries, Amos, Hosea and Micah) have promised a glorious salvation for God's people and an even more glorious messianic future. Recent circumstances (the wickedness, increased tribute to Assyria, Manasseh's capture, etc.) have brought on fear, chaos and bitterness. Judah is complaining with sarcasm that the God



of Isaiah is not fulfilling His promise. They are apparently preaching that Jehovah has no power to save them (advocating at the same time that power for rescue will come from their idols and alliances with the heathen). The nation is in a mess. The easiest explanation is to blame God for it (cf. comments 50:1-3).

God is not to blame. Their hands are filled with blood. Their lips have spouted lies. They have destroyed themselves. God has never lied to them. He has never defaulted on one of His promises. He has not cheated them, robbed them, murdered them. He can save them, but not in their condition. Should God save them, allowing them to continue in wickedness, He would be a partner in their wickedness and thus dishonest, unjust, unholy, unrighteous reducing Himself to moral impotency and consigning Himself and these people to an endless hell! God cannot be God and condone a kingdom in rebellion. If He is to rule in perfect righteousness and holiness He must rule a kingdom of citizens who have willingly surrendered to His sovereign will.

Isaiah's description of the depravity of society in Judah is similar to Hosea's description of Israel's wicked anarchy in an earlier day (before 722 B.C.) (cf. Hosea 4:1—5:15). There was no truth, no justice, no goodness in the land. There was murder, lying, slander, robbery, vain revelry and adultery. Manasseh was eventually returned to Judah. His imprisonment in the city of Babylon apparently caused him to repent, and he instituted a religious reform in the land. God's judgment of Judah was postponed for about a hundred years (until 606-586 B.C.). Manasseh's reform was only superficial. Underneath a veneer of orthodoxy was a deep-seated wickedness sown by Manasseh when he was a younger man. Eventually, Judah returned to this wickedness and God's word says it was because of Manasseh's earlier seduction of the nation (cf. II Kings 24:3; Jer. 15:4). The student should read the first 23 chapters of Jeremiah's prophecy as a record of the consequences of Manasseh's leading Judah into idolatry and sin.

v. 5-8 BARBAROUS: The *adder* is *tziphe'oni* in Hebrew and

describes the most poisonous of all serpents, or fiery serpent. The Hebrew word for *viper* is 'ephe'eh and is from the root word which means *whisperer* or *hisser*. Isaiah is emphasizing to his disciples the lethal danger of flirting with the majority of people in his day. Most men in the prophet's generation were like deadly poisonous snakes. He also likened them unto cunning spiders. Poisonous snakes lay eggs which incubate poisonous embryonic snakes. Anyone who eats of the fruit (eggs) of that poisonous society will die of the same poison. Even those who try to "crush" what that society produces shall be slain by the "snake" that comes from the egg. Most spiders use their webs as snares and hiding places ("cover"). This evil generation will be trapped by their own webs and instead of being able to hide in their webs will be exposed by them. The violent consequences of their deeds are plain to everyone. The decadence of that generation is manifested in the fact that no one really cared. It is difficult to believe that people would "run" with "haste" to shed innocent blood. But even among God's people there were "syndicates" or "mobs" of organized criminals, incredibly enough, among the priests (cf. Hosea 6:9). There is no restraint in the doing of evil. Jeremiah said they "trooped" to the houses of harlots (Jer. 5:7-8); they "lurked" like trappers lying in wait to ensnare men and women (Jer. 5:25-28). They gave their minds to dreaming, thinking, planning, plotting and preparing for wickedness all day and all night (cf. Hosea 7:4-7). They were like the wicked people of Noah's day whose "every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually . . ." (Gen. 6:5).

They did not know the "way of peace." The Hebrew word *shalom* is translated *peace* but means primarily, *soundness, wholeness, well-being, prosperity, health, goodness*. In all of the following scriptures the word *shalom* is in the original text: (Psa. 122:7; 35:27; 73:3; Job 9:4; 22:21; I Kings 9:25; Deut. 27:6; Josh. 8:31; Gen. 29:6; 37:14; 43:27; II Sam. 18:28; II Kings 4:23, 26; 5:21, 22; 9:11). In II Sam. 11:7, David asked Uriah concerning the *shalom* of Joab and the *shalom* of the people and the *shalom* (peace?) of the war. In each instance

here we have a graphic illustration of the usage of the word *shalom* being primarily, *well-being, prosperity, wholeness, integrated-goodness*. In Deut. 27:6 and Josh. 8:31 the word *shalom* is translated "uncut" stones. Only whole, sound, perfect (in the sense of uncut) stones were to be used for altars. The people of Isaiah's day did not know the way to *soundness, wholeness, prosperity, (shalom)*. They thought they did! Apparently they believed security, well-being, prosperity would result from copying their pagan neighbors and worshipping in the fertility cults of idolatry. They felt secure in allying themselves politically, militarily and economically with pagan empires. Moral crookedness, social injustice and exploitation, compromise with pagan unbelief always leads to spiritual, moral, physical and social disintegration. Sin fractures; it does not produce wholeness. Man was not made for sin; he was made for righteousness. Falsehood disorients, divides, alienates, deranges; truth solidifies, integrates, consolidates and frees. Faith in God and Christ makes *whole* (Mt. 9:12; Mk. 2:17; Lk. 5:31; Mk. 5:34; Lk. 8:48; 17:19; Jn. 5:6, 14). Peace (*shalom*) is a prominent feature of the messianic kingdom according to the prophets (cf. Isa. 2:4; 9:6; 11:6; Ezek. 34:25; Micah 4:2-4; Zech. 9:10, etc.). Ephesians 2:11-22 is a vivid illustration that the *eirene* (*peace*) of the New Testament church is of the same essence as the *shalom* of the Old Testament; that is, *wholeness, integration, unification, well-being, soundness*.

Materialism, sensuality, carnality and idolatry leads to "foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness and ruthlessness." It leads to barbarity! (cf. Rom. 1:30).

## QUIZ

1. Who was primarily responsible for the wickedness described by Isaiah here?
2. How does man "separate" himself from God's saving power?
3. Why cannot God save men in rebellion?
4. Why liken the majority of his generation to snakes?

5. What is peace?
6. What is the way of peace?
7. What does all this indicate about the meaning of peace in the N.T.?

## 2. THE CONSEQUENCES

TEXT: 59:9-15a

- 9 Therefore is justice far from us, neither doth righteousness overtake us: we look for light, but, behold, darkness; for brightness, but we walk in obscurity.
- 10 We grope for the wall like the blind; yea, we grope as they that have no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the twilight; among them that are lusty we are as dead men.
- 11 We roar all like bears, and moan sore like doves: we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.
- 12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them:
- 13 transgressing and denying Jehovah, and turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.
- 14 And justice is turned away backward, and righteousness standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter.
- 15 Yea, truth is lacking; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.

## QUERIES

- a. Who is the "we" doing the pleading for "light"?
- b. Is the confession of wickedness sincere?

## PARAPHRASE

Yes, it is on account of our crimes that our nation is in such a state of chaos. There is no justice or righteousness in our society. It is no wonder that this generation which has expected light finds nothing but darkness and ignorance. It is no wonder we grope and grasp at things like blind men; no wonder we stumble around wounding ourselves like blind men in broad daylight; no wonder we are like a nation of dead corpses. Our whole nation is filled with confusion and turmoil and some people run around like bears roaring at the agitation they are suffering. Others go moaning like troubled doves. This disordered and disturbed society looks everywhere for justice and salvation but they never find it. There is no way this society can deny the multiplicity of its sins. Our sinfulness manifests itself to us in the consequences we are suffering. We know we are a sinful, disobedient people, rebelling against the Law of Jehovah. We have deliberately turned away from Him, we have advocated oppression of our fellow man and revolt against our leaders and we are a nation of liars. Injustice is the order of the day; justice has been completely perverted. Righteousness is unheard of in this country; truth is dead in the wicked streets of the cities and honesty and fairness could not come into this society if it wanted to because it is banned. Indeed, there is no truth here, it is all falsehood, and the man who tries to quit his wickedness becomes an outcast and a hunted man!

## COMMENTS

v. 9-11 **CONFUSION:** The first part of chapter 59 is Jehovah's indictment. In 59:1-8 the Lord, speaking through Isaiah, tells Judah that He knows their sin. This section (59:9-15) is an evaluation of Judah's predicament from man's (Isaiah) perspective. It is, as it were, Isaiah concurring with the Lord's indictment. It cannot be a penitent confession of sin by the

nation of Judah. The attitude of the populace grew *more and more rebellious and not penitent* as evidenced clearly by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah says, in effect, "Lord; You are correct! This nation is filled with confusion because of its sin." The stupefying effect of the rejection of God's truth is seen in their clamoring, roaring, moaning for light and salvation while at the same time clamoring for more and more wickedness. They were like disoriented blind men groping, feeling, grasping for some object by which they might find their way. The way is there but they cannot see it because they have deliberately chosen not to see it. One is reminded of King Zedekiah who when faced with the consequences of his disobedience to God, sent for Jeremiah the prophet and asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jer. 37:17). Jeremiah had been preaching the "word from the Lord" for at least 23 years (Jer. 25:3)—why had Zedekiah been unable to find the way for 23 years? Why all of a sudden roar and moan for salvation, Zedekiah? Because he had come to the "end of his rope." He could no longer solve his problems by himself.

The nation of Judah was fast approaching the end of its rope. Isaiah recognized it. Many of the people, however, had not yet admitted it. Not until they had been violently dragged off into pagan captivity and had gotten their fill of idolatry did they confess their own helplessness and turn to God for salvation.

The interesting thing in our text here is the incongruity of moaning for salvation while running to evil and making *haste* to shed innocent blood (59:7). But what they are doing is nothing new. Israel did the same thing during the wilderness wandering, during the period of the Judges, during the period of the Seleucids and during the Roman occupation and the days of Jesus. Nation after nation has acted in the same stupid way—moaning for light while increasingly practicing darkness and roaring for salvation while continuing to enslave itself with falsehood and wickedness. This senseless paradox fits certain segments of our own society and our own country. Some Americans run around roaring for liberty while burning and

looting and shedding innocent blood. Others moan for truth in politics and religion while cheating on their income tax, stealing their neighbor's wife, violating every law they can without getting caught. People want their sins but they do not want the consequences. Judah was no different from every other generation.

v. 12-15 **CONFESSION:** As we stated earlier, this is not so much a confession of repentance as it is an admission, on Isaiah's part, that the Lord is correct about His charge against Judah. Even if this does represent a confession of sin by the nation, it is one thing to confess one's sins and another thing to repent of them. Sin and its consequences may even be regretted and still not repented of. Judas regretted betraying Christ but did not repent—he hanged himself.

As a matter of fact, it would be difficult for a nation as saturated with wickedness as Judah was *not* to be aware of its sin! The consequences of sin are usually apparent even to the sinner himself. When the consequences of sin are felt more by the society as a whole than by the individual sinner it is easier to admit the sin and the consequences, than it is when those consequences cause individual catastrophe. Individual sinners profiteering from their sin without any privations or calamity may hypocritically bemoan the sins of others in their society and go right on sinning themselves.

Apparently these verses are the righteous moanings of Isaiah the prophet concurring with God that Judah is a wicked nation. The depravity of the entire society was plainly evident. Anyone could see the nation had deliberately turned away from Jehovah and had become idolatrous. Anyone could see there was no truth anywhere in that nation; not in government, not in business, not in religion! Truth had fallen dead in the streets. Honesty and uprightness was not permitted. Any man who tried to give up his wickedness made himself a victim, a prey! He became a hunted man! Could any society become that wicked! Jeremiah was told to “run through the streets of Jerusalem . . . to see if he could find a man, *one* who does justice. . . .” (Jer. 5:1). Jeremiah, only some 80 or 90 years

removed from Isaiah, found the people of Judah *totally* committed to wickedness. Not only so, they loved it that way (Jer. 5:30-31); they could not be shamed (Jer. 6:15); no one repented of wickedness (Jer. 8:5-6); and Jeremiah was told *not* to pray for that people (Jer. 7:16-17; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1). Yes, a society can become that wicked! And it happens to any nation when its preachers do not proclaim the word of the Lord and when its rulers transgress God's commandments (cf. Jer. 2:7-13).

### QUIZ

1. Why are these verses probably not to be considered as a penitent confession of the nation of its sins?
2. How is it possible for a people to bemoan the consequences of their sins and yet keep on sinning?
3. Did Israel ever do this before? When?
4. Why is it nearly impossible for a society not to be aware of its sins?
5. How far into wickedness did the nation go as recorded by Jeremiah?

### 3. THE CURE

TEXT: 59:15b-21

- 15 And Jehovah saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.
- 16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it upheld him.
- 17 And he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a mantle.
- 18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, wrath to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands



he will repay recompense.

- 19 So shall they fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come as a rushing stream, which the breath of Jehovah driveth.
- 20 And a Redeemer will come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah.
- 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever.

### QUERIES

- a. Why did Jehovah wonder that there was no "intercessor"?
- b. When is Jehovah going to "come" as a "rushing stream"?
- c. Who is the "Redeemer" to come to Zion?

### PARAPHRASE

The Lord saw all this depravity and it excited His wrath that there was nothing being done to bring justice and righteousness to the nation. The Lord also saw that there was no one strong enough or good enough to intercede with salvation and it appalled the Lord. So the Lord is going to take it upon Himself to intercede with His own power and His own righteousness and bring salvation to His covenant people. The Lord will dress Himself in the armor appropriate for the battle (righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal) and He will conquer His enemies and punish them, no matter who they are, according to what they deserve. All over the world those who were His enemies will fear Him because He will overwhelm the world with His Spirit like a flood overwhelms the land when it is sent from heaven. Jehovah will come as a Redeemer to the Zion that has turned from transgression, He says. I, even

I, am their covenant, says Jehovah. And when I become their Redeemer, their Covenant, My Spirit will abide with them through their receiving My word and obeying My word and proclaiming My word forever.

### COMMENTS

v. 15-18 **MEDIATION:** These last verses form a fitting climax and summation to the two sections entitled, *Salvation Through God's Servant* (ch. 40-53) and *Communion Through God's Covenant* (ch. 54-59). In this text (59:15b-21) the prediction that God Himself will become the atoning Intercessor and that God in The Spirit will Himself become the Covenant is summarized.

What the Lord God saw in the wickedness of Isaiah's generation agitated His heart. The Hebrew phrase is *ra'—be'ayin* which is translated in the KJV "... it was evil in His eyes ..." but means more precisely, "*it excited His displeasure . . .*" The point is that what Jehovah saw not only excited His displeasure but it also moved Him to compassion as is evidenced by the subsequent plans to intercede Himself for salvation to those who will accept His covenant. Jehovah's agitation of spirit here is similar to that of Jesus at the graveyard in Bethany when He groaned and wept over the death of Lazarus (caused by sin) and the trying of the faith of Mary and Martha (cf. Jn. 11).

The Hebrew word *maphegi'a* is translated *intercessor*. It means literally, *to strike upon or against, or to assail anyone with petitions*. In Ruth 1:16 it is translated *urge* or *beg*. It is the word used in Jer. 7:16; 27:18; Job 21:15; Gen. 23:8; Isa. 53:12 (of the Servant) and in Jer. 36:25. When the Lord saw the wickedness and lostness of Judah, He also saw that there was no man interested or capable of petitioning Him on their behalf. They were all sinners, even Isaiah ("undone" Isa. 6:5). Who will intercede, who will stand between their wickedness and lostness and the just vengeance of Jehovah? He will! God

interposes Himself in the Incarnate Servant (cf. our comments on Isa. 45:23; 53:12; 54:9). God's own "arm" brought salvation (comments on "arm" see Isa. 40:10; 51:5; 52:10; 53:1). God upheld His own absolute faithfulness by imputing or supplying His righteousness to unrighteous man through the incarnated intercession of Himself! He accomplished both a vindication of His justness and the justification of those who believe through the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-26).

See our comments on Isaiah 53:1-12; 55:1-5; (and Daniel 9:24-27 in *Daniel*, by Butler, College Press) for extended discussion of God's imputed righteousness.

It was the *zeal* of the Lord who sent Him into this world as the incarnate Son clothed in righteousness, salvation and judgment (justice). See comments Isaiah 9:6-7. It was *zeal* for God's "house" that consumed Christ (Jn. 2:17).

These words of Isaiah may have been intended initially to predict the salvation of Judah from the Babylonian captivity by the intercession and mighty arm of Jehovah. As we have already seen, however, the release from captivity had a much more glorious goal (the messianic redemption) as its ultimate fulfillment. And these words of Isaiah are no less messianic-oriented! Indeed, Jehovah delivered Judah from exile and recompensed her Gentile captors ("the islands"). But He also judged all earthly kingdoms when He established His own eternal kingdom through the work of the Messiah as we have already pointed out. By the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God demonstrated with all the finality and absoluteness He could that the kingdoms of this world were judged. The great apostle Paul makes that the authentication of the world's judgment in Acts 17:30-31; I Cor. 15:20-28; Col. 2:14-15, etc. These words of Isaiah, then, point ultimately to the Messiah and His kingdom.

v. 19-21 MEMBERSHIP: The *mediation* (intercession) provided by God also provides *membership* or communion with God through covenant relationship. And that is precisely what this whole section of Isaiah (ch. 54-59) is all about. The "isles"

of the Gentiles, from the west and east will fear Jehovah's name and His glory. Jehovah's name and glory will flood the world ("as a rushing stream"). The Hebrew word *ruakh* is translated *breath* (v. 19), but is more generally translated *spirit*. *Ruakh* is the same word that is translated *Spirit* in verse 21. It would make more sense to us to translate the word *spirit* in verse 19. Thus the name and the glory of Jehovah that floods the world will be by the power of His Holy Spirit as He converts Gentiles and Jews through the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

The Hebrew word *goel* is translated *redeemer*. The original meaning of the word was *to demand back*, or *to extricate*. In Leviticus 25—27 the word signifies the liberation of property from a mortgage against it or a vow against it by payment or exchange. In cases of poverty, where no payment was possible, the nearest of kin was made responsible for performing the work of redemption. Thus a kinsman came to be called by the name *goel*, (cf. Num. 5:8; I Kings 16:11; Ruth 2:20; 3:2; 3:9, 12, etc.). Jesus is our *goel* (kinsman) (see Heb. 2:10-18). That this message is messianic is well established by its quotation in Romans 11:26-27. "All Israel" in Rom. 11:26 is the New Israel (Gal. 6:14-16) the church of Christ. The salvation of "all Israel" is accomplished when the Redeemer redeems both Gentiles and Jew in one body (cf. Eph. 2:11ff) and that is the intent of Isaiah 59:15b-21 and Romans 11:26-27! *Goel* is a favorite theme of Isaiah (Isa. 35:9; 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3; 62:12; 63:4). The Redeemer comes to redeem those who wish to be redeemed and express that wish in a voluntary "turn from transgression."

Two Hebrew pronouns are side by side at the beginning of verse 21; *'eni zo'th* would read literally, "I, this very One," am covenant for them. God interposed Himself with an oath. He, Himself became covenant. All the promises of God find their "Amen" in Him (II Cor. 1:20-21). His life (atoning death and justifying resurrection) became the New covenant (Mt. 26:26-29). To partake of Christ's life is to partake of His Spirit (Jn. 6:52-63). To partake of Christ's word is to partake of His life